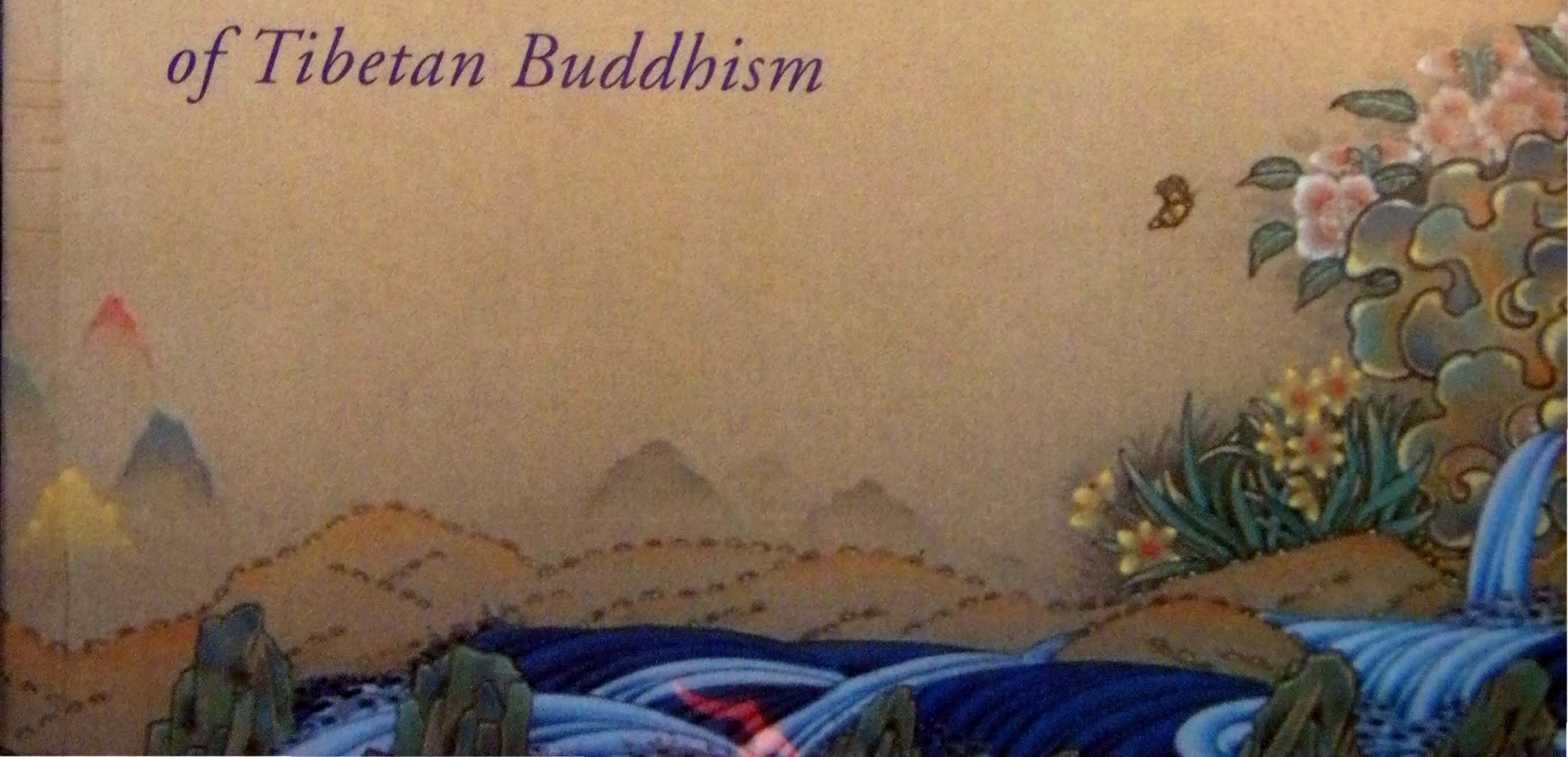


The FLIGHT of the GARUDA

COMPILED AND TRANSLATED BY

Keith Dowman

Teachings of the Dzokchen Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism



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For Jason and his generation
May all manner of things be well

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Technical Note

In my attempt to keep the language of this book accessible to the layman, the conventions I have adopted are as follows. I have capitalized the initial letter of some common English words that denote a transcendental meaning in Dzokchen terminology (e.g. Awareness, Knowledge); but there are few of these. I have used Tibetan or Sanskrit words in the text only when I have been unable to find an English equivalent. Tibetan words, in their phonetic form, are italicized the first time they are used and thereafter appear in roman. Tibetan proper names appear in a phonetic form in the text with their transliterated form in the index. In the notes (and occasionally in the text), technical Tibetan terms are transliterated (according to the Wylie system) and italicized. Many technical Sanskrit words have now been assimilated into English (yoga, samadhi, nirvana, mandala, etc.); those that have not appear in italics. Whenever the Sanskrit equivalent of a Tibetan word may be of use, primarily in the footnotes, I have included it after the transliterated Tibetan word.

Preface

This book contains the English translation of four Dzokchen texts belonging to the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism. Dzokchen, the Great Perfection, is the quintessence of the tantric paths to Buddhahood.

Among these texts, *Secret Instruction in a Garland of Vision* is one of three texts said to have been written by Padma Sambhava, Tibet's great Guru, who visited Tibet in the eighth century. It belongs to the *lam rim* genre, a stage-by-stage description of the path to Buddhahood. *The Flight of the Garuda*, written by Shabkar Lama in the nineteenth century, comprises a series of twenty-three songs designed to inspire and instruct the yogin practising Dzokchen *trekcho* meditation. The two shorter versified works are extracts from liturgical "revealed texts." *Emptying the Depths of Hell*, revealed by Guru Chowong in the thirteenth century, provides a Dzokchen confessional liturgy, and *The Wish-Granting Prayer of Kuntu Zangpo*, revealed by Rikdzin Godemchan in the fourteenth century as part of an extensive Dzokchen tantra, is a prayer for attainment of the Dzokchen goal.

In the introduction to the book I have attempted to place Dzokchen in a nondogmatic, less abstract and more human context, by providing a subjective explication of it. Necessarily, western notions and personal proclivities, needs and biases have slipped into this interpretation. Insofar as my understanding is imperfect the result is partial and unorthodox. However, the reader may benefit from this personal commentary if, through inspiration derived from the translations, he fills the gaps, bridges the contradictions, and jumps beyond the verbal inadequacies to a Dzokchen view. But no text or commentary is a substitute for

transmission from an exemplar of Dzokchen attainment who demonstrates the Dzokchen path spontaneously and directly.

For my understanding of Dzokchen I have been dependent upon the kindness of many Lamas. Kanjur Rimpoche, Dudjom Rimpoche, Khyentse Rimpoche, Jortra Lama, Jatrul Rimpoche Sangye Dorje, Namkhai Norbu Rimpoche, Dodrubchen Rimpoche, Trinle Norbu Rimpoche, Taklung Tulku Pema Wangyel, have all given me crucial insights into the tradition. The merit of any benefit accruing from this book is dedicated to their aspirations. Also, I am very grateful to Martin Parenchio, John Deweese and my wife, Meryl, for their assistance in editing the manuscript.

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

I. THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF DZOKCHEN

The Starting Point:[1] *A Personal Perspective*

"Simplicity" was a word that my Lama[2] often extracted from his small store of abstract nouns to express the nature of Dzokchen in English. It is the simplicity of Dzokchen that makes it so difficult to speak about, so elusive and also, when the mind is veiled by its usual ignorance, somewhat nebulous. But what is implied by simplicity[3] is the key to the Lama's mysteries, his power and knowledge, the key to the state of being that would make a World Emperor envious. It is the "simplicity" of Dzokchen to which the highest yogin aspires, and it is the reward that the Lama proffers his disciples during the frequent discourses upon karmic cause and effect and the precious human body and during the arduous practice of prostrations at the beginning of the path. The build-up is systematic, prolonged and intense, but from the very beginning Dzokchen is the goal. This Dzokchen of which I am speaking is the highest, most secret and most direct of the paths to Buddhahood in the tradition of Tibetan tantric Buddhism. It is the most sacred of paths, the essence of the mystic wisdom of the East, the most treasured jewel in the sacred treasury of Buddhist Tantra, and it is called the Great Perfection.[4]

Before and after shades of the prison-house closed around me, I felt, yet sought reassurance, that a human being is perfectible. Many in the generation that matured during the 1960s found confirmation of this intuition in Buddhism's teaching that there is no limit to

the potential of a human being. Later, such individuals, becoming the harbingers of a significant social movement, found that the Buddhist Tantra presented this and other essential practical existential theses in a vital and immediate form that exercised the intuition more than the intellect. The Bodhisattva path of the exoteric mahāyāna, which teaches without any equivocation man's perfectibility, demands many successive lifetimes of self-sacrificial devotion before the goal is achieved. The "here and now" ethos of the sixties was not conducive to a long hard slog towards a goal to be achieved after innumerable rebirths. Besides, to the childhood conviction that man was perfectible had been added the post-adolescent belief that the rational, speculative intellect was at best a tool for manipulating reality and was more likely to be a guileful deceiver creating mental miasmas, sometimes in intoxicating forms, but ultimately to be damned by its onanistic nature. Such notions brought into question even the supportive, liberating concepts of both eastern and western philosophical and metaphysical systems. Logical, systematic analysis and deductive and dialectical thought was of use in science, but Truth was enigmatic, paradoxical and supra-mental.

Gnosis,[5] compassion, tranquility, a radiant multi-dimensional Gestalt and existential fearlessness were the functions and attributes that I required of my reality. This reality was best expressed in paradox. The reality of the Indian mahāsiddhas[6] of the eighth to the twelfth centuries as demonstrated in their songs and legends evinced these characteristics, and the Tibetan Lamas were the holders of the lineages the mahāsiddhas founded. The Indian sadhus of the Nath community, for instance, also held lineages originating from the mahāsiddhas, and their life-styles were also attractive and their existential fearlessness self-evident. But to identify a living eastern tradition that teaches the techniques of awareness and mastery that I desired was one thing; to gain access to the tradition, find a teacher, and obtain initiation was another. What is it that determines which path is followed when we reach a crossroads lacking

a signpost? What determines which people we meet and with whom we fall in love? What allows which turtles to win races with hares? On the Great Indian Spiritual Quest, or the Quest for the Holy Grail in Albion, action taken in the face of imponderables at a crossroads determines whether we are to find the Tibetan Lama or the Nath Guru or whether we return the way we came. The quest can rarely begin if the seeker has a round-trip ticket and a home and family awaiting him, or if he runs hither and thither on a preconceived mission with the pretension that he can control his fate. "Non-action" and "aimlessness"[7] are required to develop the receptivity and tranquility necessary to take correct action at the point of indecision, to find the teacher—and the tradition.

In the search for a master, the truth of the adage "When the disciple is ready the master will appear" seems fundamental and incontrovertible. There is nothing to do but await in mental silence for recognition of the Guru, the Guru within and the Guru-Buddha outside, when he appears. The holistic laws of synchronicity may consummate the encounter with the Guru immediately, or perhaps the seeker must wait until the moment before the final goal is attained—there is no telling. But the twelve-year sādhana the Indian siddha Nāropa practised before his Guru Tilopa decided the time was ripe for his initiation, for instance, was as significant a part of his training as the post-initiation period. Thus the teacher chooses the disciple, and the tradition entered upon is determined by the shape of the receptive framework of the mind that allows this Guru, rather than another, to embrace it. So when, for example, I say that I came to India to study Tibetan Buddhism, find a teacher and practise Tantra, the Guru knows that actually while roaming aimlessly in samsara I was sufficiently one-pointed in my dissatisfaction, and in my drive to reach existential roots, that emotional attachment along with preconception and strong belief was sufficiently neutralized for me to recognize the shape of the Guru resident from the first in the simplicity of our original

existential condition. The shape of my karmic predisposition led me to the Tibetan Buddhist Tantra, and initiation into a tantric lineage was inevitable after reaching the requisite degree of honesty necessary to face my deepest proclivities without equivocation and without veiling reinterpretation.

So Tibetan Buddhism, the tradition of the Lamas, was my own predilection, though at the beginning I had not heard the name of Dzokchen, the yoga that guarantees Buddhahood in this lifetime. I had not yet heard expounded any tradition that formalized my untutored and disparate intuitions about Reality, or the process of realizing it, which seemed to me to be the main purpose of life.

It may be that there was never any doubt about my fate, that nothing I could do would alter my destiny. But in the Dzokchen view destiny and free-will are no dichotomy: whatever "is" arises spontaneously as magical illusion in the ground of being, neither coming into existence nor ceasing to be. In the ceaseless dance of yogins and yoginis in the Buddhafield of Pure Pleasure there is neither freedom nor bondage, no awareness or ignorance, no coming or going, no renunciation or self-development, no self-determination or predestination; and if such transcendence is not the present actuality, then it is better to keep quiet rather than utter this or that partial, biased opinion. This may appear to be an elitist viewpoint. It excludes those not yet on the path from knowledge of it. But the truth of Dzokchen is applicable only to those on the path of Knowledge (*rigpa*). For others there is validity and purpose in the truth of karmic inevitability, moral cause and effect, and the progress of self-determined self-development on a relative level to a place where the Dzokchen vision is glimpsed and nondual precepts have meaning.

There was never any doubt in my mind about the credibility of the tradition or its teachers. The lineage was at least a thousand years old, and before the Communist invasion of Tibet in 1949 the entire culture of the Land of Snows was directed towards the

attainment of the Dzokchen goal or a similar formulation of Buddhahood.[8] While I was wearing the maroon robe of the Tibetan Buddhist orders, mere mention of the word Dzokchen to the informed layman would evoke respect for the western student who aspired to it. Acknowledgement of this highest aspiration to a visiting Lama invariably provoked amazement that a foreigner had gained access to Dzokchen instruction, leaving one feeling like a worm aspiring to divine rebirth. Perhaps such a Lama would indicate in his inevitable circumlocutory style that Dzokchen was so secret that even he had no knowledge of it, and certainly never was his conceit so great that he had ever aspired to attain its goal! If he was prevailed upon to impart precepts, he would announce perhaps an elementary topic and speak about the rainbow body, or maybe he would label a talk on karmic retribution an essential lesson in Dzokchen: the theoretical axiom that Dzokchen cannot be spoken of directly is constantly demonstrated by the Lamas in practice. The most potent source of teaching is the mudra, mantra and tantra of the Dzokchenpa Lama's walking, sitting, talking, eating, drinking, laughing and meditation, while the most potent exterminator of doubt is the real Lama's blessing.[9]

There were few texts pertaining to Dzokchen available in English translation at that time. The exceptions were the Evans-Wentz books, particularly *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the short text in *The Book of the Great Liberation* called "The Yoga of Knowing the Mind" which made one feel already at the end of the path, and—before knowing them—that the Lamas would welcome one as a Buddha from the Western Paradise! The early work of Dr H.V. Guenther, *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, being a literary translation of Gampopa's renowned *Thar-gyen* in the Kagyupa Mahāmudrā[10] tradition, was reading highly recommended by the Dzokchen Lamas despite the work's attribution to a similar though distinct lineage. Dr Guenther's *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice* was also available at that time. This work provided a valuable lesson

in the manner of analytic thinking that was to be transcended once its functions had been fulfilled, and after its definition of the path, and the vocabulary that Gampopa used to describe it, had been absorbed. The lack of available texts in English was filled in part by many literal translations of liturgical texts that gave first indications of the nature of Dzokchen's foundation practices. For myself they also gave the initial encouragement to learn the Tibetan language not only to facilitate practice of the liturgical meditation rites, but also to produce translation that reflected the original as divine revelation, or inspired scriptural poetry, with multi-layered symbolic meaning replete with nuance, pun and paradox. However, unless an art or science—painting, music, poetry, engineering—can be fully integrated into the yogin's sādhana in the manner of the mahāmudrā siddhas, like Tantipa the Weaver or Dharmapa the Scholar, the Lamas advised that these talents should be abandoned for meditation until the purification phase was complete. This was a lesson that several fellow artists seeking initiation learnt with some misgiving.

Then what of the Lamas themselves? The mirror-like inscrutability that provides the perfect *tabula rasa* for devotees' mental projection; the unique Tibetan Buddhist sensibility and refinement whereby Buddhafields are simulated in every detail of the daily round, even to the extent of transforming faeces by mantra into liberating nectar for insects; the humility allowed by the complete self-assurance and integrity of a consummate spiritual aristocracy who have served as the high-priests of Central Asia for centuries with an incomparable magic; and the profound depth of human understanding and responsiveness, which I will call the Buddhas' compassion, exemplified by the exceptional Lama: these four elements can create a certainty within the seeker that many of these divine beings actually hold the secrets that others claim for them, and that their tulkus (incarnations who have undergone unique conditioning) are indeed the tenth or fifteenth reincarnations of Buddha-Lamas. In the

euphoria and with the high expectations of that time there was no difficulty at all in accepting the elder generation of Lamas, those who had completed their training and established themselves as teachers of their peers in Tibet, as accomplished Bodhisattvas at the very least. Even the younger generation of Lamas, who almost without exception were tulkus whose training had been broken by political turmoil, had a certain conviction and awareness about them, together with the same aura of compassion. This added to the sense that Dzokchen training was like a miracle panacea, invariably bringing automatic results.

In the older Lamas' formula for success that brought them disciples from all over the world it may be that the unique element was the extraordinary catalyst to their spiritual evolution provided by barbaric foreign invasion, war, rape and pillage of their country, their exile, and that vast welter of suffering. As the legends of the eighty-four Indian mahāsiddhas demonstrate, suffering provides the essential motivation for renunciation and meditation practice. In the Lamas' pure-land "exile" means "renunciation of homeland and family," a vital precept found in all the texts.[11] Poverty, a practice instituted by Śākyamuni Buddha himself, is a wellspring of experiential learning, particularly if those with whom the beggar interacts perceive him as a mendicant with some ethical integrity. The monastic cloth has the effect on its wearer of intensifying the hells and heightening the heavens.

The wholesale destruction of Tibet's ancient religious culture and the genocidal extermination of "reactionary" monks and laymen during the Cultural Revolution of the sixties can in no way be justified. But a Lama whose vision is always a Buddhafield remarked that the lesson of impermanence taught by the Chinese Red Guards, the truth of suffering taught by the People's Liberation Army, not to forget the instruction on karmic retribution inculcated by defeat, is worth three lifetimes of meditation in a hermitage. The theocracy that was so abused by Maoism was by no means

perfect, and the inflexibility and attachment to the *status quo* that had ossified parts of Tibetan consciousness cried out for surgery. The radical solution provided by the Chinese to the Tibetans' almost genetically conditioned conservatism was a hellish fantasy made manifest by demonic apparitions. The Red Guard leaders were driven by a "rational" ideal divorced from existential understanding. They pursued a machiavellian goal justified by a means that mutilated human sensitivity and affection, while their followers were possessed by hungry ghosts, by denizens of hell, and by animal spirits revelling in jungle law. But this grist to the Dzokchen-yogin's mill of meditation that history has recently provided, like the stroke of the za-zen master's cane on the acolyte's back, can have a highly beneficial effect on the mind's state of awareness. In many ways, experientially, this generation of Lama-exiles has been blessed by the silver lining in the disastrous political misfortunes of Tibet.[12]

An existential glow radiated from the pain-lines superimposed upon the wind and sun-worn faces of yogins and monks recently descended from the Tibetan plateau in the winter. This created a strong positive impression upon this cultural exile from the West in quest of the means to deal with his own small burden. Later, the Tibetans' success in establishing themselves in the harsh alien environment of the Indian plains, sustaining communal feeling, maintaining their spiritual practice, building monasteries and temples to reproduce in detail the monastic ambience they had left behind: all this was nothing short of magic, or at least the demonstration of mastery of the skilful means that when applied with flexibility overcome whatever obstacles arise in the adept's path. So it was not only the attraction of the metaphysics, the aesthetics and the theory of meditation that brought many of us to the Lamas, but also their good humour and a demonstrable power and high awareness all fired in the crucible of vast suffering.

In a broader analysis, social and political circumstances were

conspiring in Europe, the United States and Central Asia to create in India and Nepal the conjunction that would fulfil both Lamas' and students' destinies. While the Tibetans were arriving in their Indian exile, numbers of Europe's sons and daughters were for the first time in history setting out for India to absorb and practise the practical philosophies and psycho-spiritual arts and sciences of the East—their forebears had come to India to trade and rule. In the middle of the twentieth century, after pursuing rational, scientific dualism beyond their ability to retain connection with their subconscious roots, western societies were losing touch with the irrational, subjective, nondual foundation of consciousness. The thousands of western seekers in the East demonstrated the need, and the innumerable Asian-originated sects in the West now show the result.

The Lamas' physical need for food, shelter and clothing, the imperative to fulfil the prophecy that "when the iron bird flies the dharma will go to the west," coincided in synchronistic harmony with the needs of western societies represented by post-sixties seekers. The Lamas' needs were fulfilled through their magnetic receptivity. At this point they were mainly unaware of the social pressures and both personal and social neuroses that had formed the minds of the gathering numbers of potential disciples and yogins seeking instruction, but they were none the less eager to fulfil their destiny. Individuals who had travelled East for a month or a year, drawn by adventure into India's vast psychic space and personal freedom, frequently found themselves involuntarily pulled within a Lama's mandala and appointed to any of many various functions: monk, yogin, scholar, secretary, translator, patron. The legend of Guru Rimpoche, Padma Sambhava, the eighth-century founder of Buddhist Tantra in Tibet, who converted the Bonpo shamans and Tibet's gods and demons, extorting vows of service to the dharma in return for certain powers and awareness associated with a guaranteed status in the nascent spiritual hierarchy, casts analogical illumination upon the relationship between the Lamas and their western acolytes.

Certainly I for one had not gone to India with any intention of devoting my life to the translation of Dzokchen texts, and if anyone had then suggested that I leave England in search of a vocation that promised a life of poverty, I would have responded with incredulity.

The Starting Point: Ignorance

To avoid the unnecessary obstacles that the ego will erect when it is asked to accept its own ignorance as the starting point, ignorance must be clearly defined. In Buddhism ignorance is dualistic perception, the absence of gnostic awareness.[13] It is easier to accept our failure to achieve Buddhahood than to come to terms with living in ignorance. Still, in so far as "thinking of the key confirms the prison," any consideration of the means to attain enlightenment asserts our ignorance. At the same time, thinking of the key confirms the possibility of freedom, even if we are ignorant of it. My belief is that everyone at some time has glimpsed a state of beatitude that is liberation from the state of ignorance,[14] or nirvana, although it may not have been recognized as such at the time. Further, I think that the Buddha's liberation is known to us all, familiar like an old friend with whom we have lost contact but whose mind we know intimately. If it were not so, how could the imagery of the mahāyāna sutras describing the Buddhas' Pure-lands strike such vibrant chords of recognition and appreciation? How is it that so many of us identify immediately with the events of Śākyamuni's life? Why do we immediately intuit the veracity of the abhidharma's psychological analysis of the process of enlightenment?

Childhood with its "trailing clouds of glory" can be the most fertile period of gnostic experience, the least "ignorant" period of life, because the preconceptions and preoccupations that form the veil of mental concepts have not yet evolved into rigid mindsets. Chemical psychedelics can, if only temporarily, have the effect of

freeing those concepts, and the result is "regression" to a child-like state of freedom from conceptual blocks. In the mahāsiddhas' songs of realization the analogy of childhood is employed frequently to evoke the siddha's state of enlightenment. Seen in this light "ignorance" is not only an ephemeral twin veil[15] obscuring what the sages and scriptures assure us is the natural state of gnostic awareness, it is the means of reaching a fundamental level of reality, omnipresent and indestructible—vajra-like—that we can know experientially and can learn to abide in constantly and uninterruptedly.

This is not to underestimate the dogged persistence of the proclivities that give rise to emotional clouds and incomplete thoughtforms that obscure reality. One of the most significant features of Dzokchen, an aspect that characterizes it as a "shortcut approach" to Buddhahood, is a glad acceptance of the virtual impossibility of eradicating the propensities conditioned genetically, karmically or in childhood "education" that produce our habitual reaction patterns. This understanding is reflected in the basic meditation precept "Leave alone whatever arises in the mind. Do not seek to change or alter anything. It is all perfect as it stands," and so on. Relaxing the mind, the propensity to evaluate, judge and react positively or negatively to whatever arises, falls away. Thus detachment evolves. Detachment is the key to penetrating the two veils. In other words, the twin veil is not to be torn down, but, rather, penetrated by the eye of perfect insight that perceives the emptiness within through detachment from the form without.

Thus we have a more precise notion of ignorance: it is a function of attachment. The unifying factor of gnostic awareness is the emptiness of both the sensory stimulus and penetrating insight. Dualistic perception, ignorant perception, is the tendency to objectify the form of the sensory stimulus due to attachment to it. In a more blunt formulation, for the Dzokchenpa hatred, lust and the other passions are not ignorance; they are friendly helpers on the path that create energy and light, and they turn the Wheel of Life to create the

six mental environments that give our lives shape. Thus, although still we may be faced with heaven and hell, the animal's jungle realm, the realm of hungry ghosts, and so on, when we are free of attachment we are exemplars demonstrating the techniques of liberation in the guise of the "Hungry-ghost Buddha," "Dharmarāja-Buddha," "Lord-of-Beasts Buddha," etc. This is one of the meanings of the axiom "The starting point is the goal."

The Starting Point: Initiation

This introduction is structured according to the traditional triadic format of starting point (or ground), path and goal. In Dzokchen "The starting point is the path, the path is the goal and the goal is the starting point." If the mind is dull or meditation unusually bleak, a predictable response to that statement may be "Since there is nowhere to go and nothing to do, what is the purpose of Dzokchen, and why practise any form of yoga?" "The starting point is the goal" refers to the unchanged form of awareness: the forms that arise are the same as ever. The difference lies in the all-important detachment from these forms and the cessation of grasping and clinging. The purpose of Dzokchen is to bring the aspirant to recognition of what is as obvious as daylight; and the blinders to recognition are attachment to the twin veil of emotion and intellect. With a modicum of detachment it becomes evident what happens to emotion and thought. They may not disappear but there is a radical transformation of quality, and motivation becomes that of the Bodhisattva Vow. Thus although there may be no striving towards a Bodhisattva's mind-state, there is a spontaneous evolution towards it.

However, in a state of ignorance, how do we meditate with detachment? If nothing is to be done, if nothing can be done because all effort is derived from counter-productive attachment, how can we break the continuum of ignorance? The answer is initiation, initiation by direct introduction to the nature of mind. Such

initiation induces the state of mind that breaks the vicious circle of moral and mental cause and effect, replacing "horizontal" rational thought-processes with a "vertical," creative, muse/ḍākinī-inspired effusion of primal awareness. Meditation upon that state (formless meditation) deconditions consciousness, leaving the original existential condition to arise spontaneously moment by moment.

We are still not out of the woods. If initiation is understood as an enlightenment experience, how can this spontaneous event be induced? Is it simply a matter of formal initiation? This problem should not be glossed over. What error to mistake formal initiation for a real initiatory experience upon which meditation can be based! Initiation implies discovery of the real Buddha-Lama (in distinction to a human preceptor), and seeking precludes finding. The basis of Dzokchen achievement is not attained without initiation; initiation is the function of the Lama; and the "Lama" is a state of acausal primal awareness. The Indian mahāsiddha Nāropa, the "Indomitable," with his unflagging quest for the unfindable represented by his Guru, Tilopa, is the exemplar in this situation. Without experiential initiation we must practise preliminary techniques and the trekcho meditations described in *The Flight of the Garuda*. These are the meditative techniques of Dzokchen, so finely-honed by generations of yogic experiment in the laboratory of the mind that inevitably they bring quick results. They prepare the mind for initiation, and initiatory experience can arise during practice of them.

The mainstream Dzokchen schools, the *nyingthik* lineages for example, do not teach the uncompromising dogma of "sudden liberation," the doctrine that implies the futility of attempting to condition the relative mind to an absolute reality. Going beyond specious argument there is commitment to a middle path of "absolute relativity" in which the aspirant is induced to accept intuitively "Buddhahood here and now." In practice, consideration of the dichotomy of sudden and gradual enlightenment should not enter the mind, while at the same time the aspirant practises on

the graduated path that may lead to the pith meditations of *The Flight of the Garuda*. But service to sentient beings, generosity, regular offerings of flowers in the temple, prostrations, visualization and mantra, are all skilful means to the attainment of Dzokchen, and any of them can provide the psychic environment in which initiation, or sudden liberation into one's true condition, is achieved. Furthermore, such practices generate vital merit—credit in the karmic bank. On this path the mind may be reconditioned by replacing useless, confused thought-processes with merit-generating processes that induce the requisite susceptibility to the Lama's blessing—premonition of initiation—and the ground of initiation is cultivated thereby.

The nature of the ground of initiation can best be understood by introducing the basic concepts and meditations that the Buddha Śākyamuni taught. It may appear at times that Tantra in general, and Dzokchen in particular, are far divorced from the teaching of early Buddhism. On the contrary, it is assumed that the fundamental truisms contained in the Four Noble Truths form the bedrock of the aspirant's mentality: suffering as the nature of existence, desire as the principal human drive, nirvana as the only human goal worthy of aspiration, detachment as the path to happiness. Any progress towards eradication, neutralization, transformation, or full awareness of the twin veil of emotion and mental concepts can prepare the ground for initiation. Discursive contemplation derived from the Four Noble Truths, discussed in the following paragraphs, can be highly efficacious in establishing a receptive attitude to the Lama. When such analysis is understood experientially the roots of desire and suffering are severed. If our attachment to thoughtforms can be decreased, gaps in our slavish obedience to the mind's "rational" dictates leaves space for the Lama to make himself known. Since much neurotic or uncontrollable thought is provoked by fear—our insecurities sometimes arise in the most outrageous thoughtforms—fear can be reduced by quietening anxiety about the nature of

existence and the purpose of life. Experiential understanding tames our mundane hopes and fears about food, shelter and clothing, and the eight worldly obsessions[16]—all the rubbish of the mind.

The following questions and answers were the Buddha Śākyamuni's own. The Four Noble Truths arose out of these questions on the nature of existence and reality. The primary question is "What is the principal attribute of existence?" Answer: suffering, the First Noble Truth. The second question is "What is the cause of suffering?" Answer: desire, the Second Noble Truth. The answer to the first question is reached by equating existence with suffering. Existence consists of birth, sickness, old age and death. Existence is sustained on every level by desire: desire (including its antithesis), and concomitant attachment and clinging, is the dynamic of existence. Any taste of true happiness that we achieve in existence is the result of the cessation of attachment. Happiness is not nonexistence since the same situations (birth, sickness, etc.) still arise; and it is not existence because the quality of happiness is unending, "empty," blissful awareness. If happiness does not possess these attributes it is not the Buddha's happiness, but rather, a lesser degree of suffering in which attachment is still operative. Thus, in the Buddha's terms, the happiness of the gods is not true happiness because attachment, as fear of eventual loss of divinity through death, works in the gods' minds like a canker conceived in their spring of seeming contentment to mature in a winter of bile and gall.

Suffering is failure to get what we want; suffering is getting what we do not want; suffering is fear of loss; suffering is losing what we have. After obtaining our desires we suffer the pride of possession; we suffer jealousy if someone else has what we want or something better than we have. In all these situations desire and grasping are the cause of our suffering. To take sexual desire, one universal desire, as an example: we suffer pangs of desire; we suffer the anguish of longing; we suffer unsatisfied lust; we suffer selfish satisfaction; we suffer loss in lust's aftermath; we suffer loss of the object

of desire; we suffer the perversions of desire; we suffer unformed adolescent desire, the frustrations of mature desire, and the rage of impotent desire; we suffer lovesickness, falling out of love, and all the neuroses of love and desire; and we suffer sexually transmitted disease. There is some form of pain involved in every stage of sexual desire. Indeed, love and desire are all suffering unless and until there is detachment from this desire. Whatever of the Buddha's happiness there is in desire, and in its corollary love, is the result of transcendence of desire, a state obtained through eradication, neutralization or intensification of passion.[17] The Third and Fourth Noble Truths are the truth of cessation of desire (nirvana) and the truth of the path to cessation, which is practical experience of Buddhadharma, particularly Dzokchen precepts.

The yogin is separated from those who have no knowledge of the Four Noble Truths by his conviction that happiness has nothing to do with satiation of desire. By karmic propensity, by the grace of a teacher, by fortuitous revelation or insight, he has seen that nothing so ephemeral as desire fulfilled is worth the striving. Life is short; death is always at hand; the potential of the human being is far too great to waste on simple psychological, sensual or physical gratification. He must have had a vision of the greater existential potential, a vision partaken of by yogins, saints, seers and sages in every part of the world since time began. His definition of happiness begins at freedom from desire. And what remains after desire no longer directs his body, speech and mind? Simple but pure sensory perception![18]

Such was the Buddha Śākyamuni's insight. Virtually the entire Buddhist canon, both sutra and tantra, is concerned in some way with the mechanics of desire and of sensory perception, the part played by ethics and behavioural discipline, and particularly in the mahāyāna by selfless giving, which arises simultaneously with the attainment of the primal awareness inherent in unobstructed sensual perception. To comprehend the sophistication and complexity of the various solutions to a problem that in its bold, unadorned

interrogative form seems to be a simple psychological problem, but which upon investigation turns into an insoluble labyrinthine enigma, we need only look at the mandalas, mantras and metaphysical equations that constitute a "root tantra." Such is the complexity of mind, and it is all in answer to the question of how to sustain pure sensory perception unclouded by thought and emotion.

Sensory perception begins at the moment of birth and continues every moment until death. In sleep our senses are interiorized in dream. What is the constant in this sensory process? It can only be the absolute element of being. Some Hindus call it *satcittānanda*—truth, consciousness and bliss. In Buddhism, since this constant cannot be located or specified in any way, it is called *śūnyatā*—emptiness.[19] This emptiness, which can also be conceived as a "fullness," is synonymous with "thatness," "the nature of mind," "the womb of Buddhahood," and "reality": there is no trace of world-denial in the Buddhist tantric view of life. Emptiness does not exist—if it can be said to exist at all—as an independent entity;[20] it is best described as "all-pervasive," "all-penetrating"; and there is nothing that it excludes. Further, since it is identified with the nature of mind, once detachment is achieved it is with emptiness that the yogin identifies, and identifying with emptiness he identifies with the nature of all things. In this way the Buddha's omniscience and omnipotence are a function of simple sensory perception, and simple—pure—sensory perception is the starting point and the goal.

The ground of initiation is laid by absorption of this vision and by any of the innumerable techniques of meditation that facilitate it. The primal awareness, the pure gnostic awareness of sensory perception that is the starting point and the goal, is also the initiation. I have already defined initiation as the enlightenment experience that is the condition *sine qua non* of finding the Buddha-Lama. The Buddha-Lama is the agent of the initiation. After initiation the practice of maintaining constant union with him is the essential Dzokchen discipline. Upon initiation, both relative and absolute

pledges (the *samayas*) are sworn: the relative pledges of Body, Speech and Mind support the yogin in his action, speech and samadhi, while his central practice is to condition his being in maintaining the constant primal awareness inherent in each moment of perception until gnostic vision is the irrevocable norm.

The Starting Point: Karmic Acceleration

The Dzokchenpa consciously entered a dangerous shortcut existential path when he committed himself to his samayas at the time of initiation. It is probable that the wisdom that guided him was the precipitation of a serious trauma, or was it the product of a series of extraordinary events that caused rapid karmic acceleration? Meditation is the most prudent, controlled and highly tested karmic accelerator. War, rape, a near fatal accident or disease, or any profound emotional trauma, can also give the victim an understanding of his own mortality and bring consequent appreciation of the rare and precious opportunity that human birth affords. Such experiences impress the victim with the significance of the truth of impermanence and with the urgency of making up for time lost, and it involves an awakening to the laws of moral or behavioural cause and effect (karma). Such understanding is vital in accelerating karma to the point where renunciation of the hedonistic world is a necessary prerequisite to continued existence on the planet, and where it becomes evident that one's own best interests are intrinsically bound up with the good of all sentient beings. The "four mind-benders,"[21] discursive contemplation comprising preliminary exercises to tantric meditation, are undoubtedly effective and induce such realization without risking life and limb or sanity, and they may provide other benefits besides. But experiential lessons engraved in consciousness never to be forgotten, informing every impulse, provide the more valuable foundation to Dzokchen practice.

The Path: Entering the Stream

The "streamwinner" is already a yogin. He gains this status by a profound recognition of his own ignorance. "Ignorance," defined above as an absence of gnostic awareness, is experienced in everyday life as confusion, neurosis, stupidity, sloth, bewilderment, and unfettered emotivity and thought. There are vulgarisms that best describe this state. Recognition of the emotional confusion of our lives and the psychologically negative role of interpretive, judgmental thought is the first positive step in the direction of attaining a higher state of awareness, and our emotions are the most accessible field of experience where with penetrating insight emptiness can be perceived. As *The Flight of the Garuda* has it, "How ridiculous to expect to find primal awareness and emptiness after you have suppressed passion!"[22] Thus the Dzokchen precept "Do not suppress thought and emotion" is as valid for the egoist, whose superego refuses to allow him to acknowledge his "base self," as it is for the self-righteous, pious, "disciplined" altruist who rationalizes away his fears and inhibitions by invoking the moral code of his order. To deny desire is to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. In this way recognition of our confusion, which is only thought and emotion, is the beginning of the path.

Complete and perfect recognition[23] is initiation itself. But it is a very lucky person indeed who has a moment of sudden recognition of the nature of his entire being and sustains it. Most of us go through a process of self-knowledge gradually unfolding successive levels of the subconscious mental waste that have accumulated since childhood and through many lives. The revelation of this subconscious material can be a very painful experience, exacerbated by the pain inherent in understanding how far we fall short of the view we have of ourselves. Some New Age cults are dedicated to the admirable task of revealing this aspect of the psyche, each cult with its own aims and different degrees of compassion for the initiate. In

Dzokchen, recognition of the nature of mind alone is the aim. Once this is achieved, the power of pure perception with its inherent self-originated Knowledge leads on to perception of the next instant of self-revelation, producing a stream of consciousness that can become a continuum of pure pleasure and delight.

Confession is the ritual formulation of this necessary psychic cleaning. The Dzokchen prayer of confession, *Emptying the Depths of Hell*, shows how the Dzokchen vision must be applied to whatever mental rubbish or conflicting emotions are revealed during the time of self-appraisal. A false view of this rubbish, identification with it or total rejection of it, is identification with a demon or escape from the reality of our own being: it is evident that the dangers of departing from a neutral, middle view into extreme, potentially unhealthy reactions and emotional upheavals can produce insanity. Indeed, even if this process of purification is practised in the light of Dzokchen vision the dangers are manifold. *The Flight of the Garuda* mentions only the greatest evil, which is identification with the vast psychic power released at the end of the process, creating a malicious demonic force.[24] Another more potent technique in the canon of preliminary Dzokchen instruction teaches the initiate how to evoke the psychic environments produced by the various six basic emotions and how to utilize emotion to fuel this fire.[25] This is instruction in the method of recognition of emotion and thought when they arise in daily practice.

To apply the axiom "the starting point is the goal" to this particular aspect of the path, recognition is the first act of the initiate and the last, and it is the path itself. The ground of the path consists of emotion and thought. The more intense the emotion, and the more fearful and fragmented the thought, the greater the potential for the light and awareness that penetrates to the emptiness of the form: the path consists of a razor's edge that the yogin walks in constant peril of falling into the vajra-hell. However, in the mainstream of Dzokchen practice this razor's edge is internalized. Passion is not to

be invoked and exaggerated in any public forum. The uncontrolled yogin is not free of moral cause and effect, and gross literal practice of these precepts will result in a fall as surely as smoke arises from fire. Only if the yogin's karma is such that his recognition is insufficient to neutralize gross active manifestation of passion will he fall into the error of taking his meditation into passionate situations outside his retreat hut. The overriding precept is "neither indulge nor reject" in respect of the situations that karma provides, and constant training in this practice modifies karma, as "horizontal," or linear causation, becomes subservient to the "vertical" effusion of compassionate energy.[26]

The Path: The Dharma as a Raft

The dharma is likened to a raft carrying sentient beings across the ocean of life. On the bank of the other shore is the death beyond which is eternal life. In the case of the Dzokchen adept there awaits a rainbow body. The mind of the adept becomes one with the vast field of space that is the ground of being. Out of this ground are emanated all of samsara and nirvana in variegated light-forms, and tulkus are manifest in bodies of light to work for the salvation of all beings. The raft of dharma is abandoned on the other shore, for here the names of samsara and nirvana are unknown, the path called no-more-learning begins, and simultaneous with the landing is the realization that the dharma is as temporal and ephemeral as the rest of creation and that its truth is expedient to accomplishment of its own end. Its purpose is usurped by no-purpose, for the keyword on the other shore is spontaneity. Certainly, a purpose can be discerned by the ignorant conceptualizing mind, and clearly the intent of all movement and quiescence is the enlightenment of all sentient beings. But the acausal, non-originated emanations, which comprise the Dance of the Ḍākinī, arise adventitiously and spontaneously, forming a synchronistic

pattern lacking evident linear relationship. However, from the point of view of the devotee at the boarding stage on the near shore, the raft seems to be an absolute.

There must be no doubt as to the efficacy of the method upon which the sādhaka's entire life-fortune and future lives depend. So the Lama and the scriptures make much of the safety of each particular boat, stressing the superior design and construction that allows quick and easy access to the other shore. In Dzokchen the proclivity for doubt is especially potent, and invariably at some point the questions "Why meditate?" and "What use is the dharma?" will arise. Before realization of the nature of reality as emptiness, of form as phantom and illusion, of speech as empty echo, and of the dharma as an expendable prop, becomes a spontaneous and reflexive response, there is danger of the yogin cutting off the hand that feeds him while his appetite is yet unsated. *The Flight of the Garuda* recommends recommitment and re-initiation at the Lama's feet in times of doubt and pride.[27]

The Path: Vision

"Vision" is an unchanging perspective on the nature of reality. The path, the Four Noble Truths, the nature of ignorance and Dzokchen is all "vision." The concept of vision will be discussed in detail in the introduction to the *Garland of Vision* (see p.160). In the fourfold framework of analysis of the path provided by vision, meditation, action and the goal,[28] vision or view is the first head, and everything that can be written, spoken or thought is seen from the standpoint of Dzokchen vision. Thus this entire work is a commentary on Dzokchen vision and the discursive mind is the filter through which the vision is expressed. Another analysis identifies "vision" as the starting point, "meditation" as the path and "action" as the goal. No doubt such a view teaches a valuable truth about the fundamental but limited use of the intellect, but "vision" has another

meaning, which is best translated as "seeing." This is the practical aspect of the precept "vision" as opposed to the theoretical exercise in this verbal explanation of the Dzokchenpa's perspective. Perhaps the only distinction between these two aspects is the level of clarity of the mind involved. When the Lama writes this introduction his thoughts are the direct expression of his enlightened detachment at the moment of writing. When he rises from his seat of inspiration his vision is sustained. He still "sees" all appearances as the Buddha's body, all sound as the Buddha's word and all thought as the Buddha's pure gnostic awareness. When the Lama thinks "all emptiness is form and all form is emptiness" (if such an absurdity ever crosses his mind) it is so. When we think such a thought we may be affected for good or bad by the degree of our attachment to the words.

There is a dialectic in Dzokchen thought, difficult to catch and analyze, that is effective in detaching the mind from all concepts whatsoever and persuading the intellect that the middle path of perfect detachment is the path to that holistic balance wherein the human potential for power and awareness is maximized. Evidently, this process is not *neti neti* ("not this, not that"), the process of systematic denial and refutation of whatever concept arises, which has been employed by Hindu schools to great effect. Rather it is an application of Ārya Nāgārjuna's formula of fourfold refutation.[29] The nature of the Dzokchenpa's reality is frequently described as "indeterminable"[30] or "that which cannot be described by any of the eight extremes": coming into being, ceasing to be; eternal, momentary; existent, nonexistent; as appearance or emptiness. This indeterminable nature of the Dzokchenpa's reality can be restated in the anuyoga metaphor: the energies of the right and the left psychic channels emptied into the central channel, the *avadhūti*. When a perfect holistic balance is obtained the "excluded middle" is realized. Guru Chowang's confessional *Emptying the Depths of Hell* is a fine expression of this balancing act.

Since no concept is ultimately valid, every concept is valid to

some degree. The validity of an idea is determined by its efficacy. Ideas such as those embodied in the Bodhisattva Vow and the *Heart Sutra* are universally efficacious, although even these transcendental notions may be poison in the minds of some unbalanced individuals. Every idea has its time and place. From the Dzokchen viewpoint argument as to the ultimate validity of an idea is the occupation of fools.

The Path: Meditation

If "vision" is the function of pure perception, "meditation" is an unbroken stream of seeing. ("Action" is the dynamic form of the yogin's being.) Dzokchen meditation is a formless meditation, which means that there is no object upon which to concentrate, no visualization to construct and contemplate, no distinction made between subjective cognizer and sensory object. Meditation in the Dzokchen context is the active expression of gnostic awareness. It is outside the realm of cause and effect, so there can be no question of directing the mind towards any form of samādhi. Whatever arises appears spontaneously without coming into existence or ceasing to be, and the awareness from which it is inseparable is likewise an aspect of the continuum of space, colour and name that is beyond the function of the mind to express. Attachment and detachment are perceptual errors in the dualistic realm of sensory object and mental subject: in Dzokchen meditation there is no duality and no problem generated by ignorance.

The Dzokchen meditations described in the translations herein are "preliminary" exercises. The adjective "Dzokchen" indicates the goal of a lineage of practitioners, but may not pertain to the definition of "meditation" as given above. The analysis of consummate Dzokchen meditation is a description of the enlightened mind from the standpoint of perfect awareness, Knowledge (*rigpa*), and remains unutterable.

The Path: Action

The Dzokchenpa is first a shape-shifter. No outer or inner form expresses his secret nature, which is emptiness, more than any other; no one specific form of practice is correct practice; and no one outer form of conduct can be adopted as a universal method of service to sentient beings over any other. Insofar as each situation demands a different form of response and expression, the Dzokchen yogin is a chameleon. Just as the chameleon naturally and spontaneously changes colour as the chemistry of response works in his body, so the yogin changes his mudra (gesture, posture) and mantra (spoken word) as the bodhicitta of compassion floods his being at the inception of each new human situation in his sense-fields. The entire gamut of emotivity, intellectual stance and social role comprise his wardrobe; he is as much at home in the temple as in a brothel; and his friends may as well be found among thieves as courtiers. Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, the Dzokchenpa can manifest in any form in any milieu.

However, until he has reached the end of the path, there are certain inner modes that the Dzokchenpa may find more expedient than others. After all, the Bodhisattva Vow is an unsleeping master, and some social roles virtually preclude loving one's neighbour on an overt level. So before the drawing of breath also becomes fulfilment of the Vow, it may be expedient to seek situations where altruistic aspiration has free play. Later, when the bodhicitta arises spontaneously in a constant stream, when transcendent compassion is an integral part of every moment of pure sense perception, the Dzokchenpa can manifest only bodhisattvic emanations. Thus the compassionate nature of the Dzokchenpa's vision and his consequent activity is not systematically cultivated. Rather, compassion is the goal itself under a different name, and having achieved the goal, nothing that can be done is free from compassionate motivation. As Shabkar Lama says in *The Flight of the Garuda*, "Coincident with

the development of a happy, glowing, thought-free samādhi is the birth of authentic compassion, which is like the love a mother holds for her only son....This compassion is a very special feature of Dzokchen vision."[31]

Whatever his outer form, the Dzokchenpa is always a yogin and the yoga he practises is *atiyoga* (sustaining Knowledge). Any other technique from simple calisthenic yoga[32] to manipulation of the vital breath with mantra and visualization, is employed as required. The Dzokchen-yogin's cave is the cave of emptiness, where Kuntu Zangpo, the Primordial Buddha, sits in eternal meditation. In the realm of radiance and vibration he is the yidam deity, his bone ornaments the five passions[33] recognized as the five aspects of primal awareness. In the realm of compassionate reflexive action he is Guru Rimpoche; his vajra-sceptre, unfailing compassion; and his bell, penetrating insight into the nature of all situations as emptiness; and so forth.

However, in Himalayan Asia many renunciate yogins skilled in yogas besides atiyoga are Dzokchenpas. My first and most loving Dzokchen teacher was a Khampa yogin named Jortrala, who lived near Darjeeling as his patron's house-priest, wore the hair knot, and demonstrated a traditional disregard for personal appearance. Tibetan yogins rarely went naked or wore the single piece of cotton cloth unless they were practising *tumo*, heat-yoga, on the snow-line. So, the Dzokchenpa may also be a priest, and insofar as many great Lamas of Tibetan refugee society are priests as well as Dzokchenpas, the impression is rife that Dzokchen is essentially a monopoly of the hierarchical priesthood of tulkus. Such an impression is false. Many of the great Lamas of Tibetan refugee society, including the Dalai Lama and, of course, many of the Nyingma School Lamas, are Dzokchenpas, but they all would vie to disavow any superiority in Dzokchen over its humblest mendicant practitioner. The role of priest may actually work against progress in Dzokchen, since the tendency to identify the absolute

with the sacred, as against the profane, is sometimes present in the priest's work.

Another role expedient in the practice of Dzokchen is that of healer. Since healing is essentially a reimposition of balance and detachment, the Dzokchenpa who stands identified with the empty awareness and compassion that transcend all sickness (and health) is in a position to transfer the energy and love required to reimpose equilibrium within the patient's unbalanced psycho-organism. Skill in the science of energy-flows in mental, neural and hemal spheres, in pharmacology and posology, etc., assists the healer's essentially psychosomatic art. A healer may not always be a Dzokchenpa, but a Dzokchenpa always has the capacity to heal.

To those ignorant of psychosomatics—and semantics—healing can appear to be magic, and indeed the Dzokchenpa is always a magician in many senses of the word. The magic of shape-shifting and healing has already been mentioned. The magic of the mahāsiddhas, such as materialization, walking through rock, speed-walking, alchemical preparation of the elixir of deathlessness, raising the dead, and so forth, (ambiguous statements that must be interpreted on two levels) is attained at the end of the path. The most important magic, the enchantment that is indicative of the supreme siddhi's accomplishment, is gnostic awareness of the moment-to-moment spontaneous manifestation of the grand sensory illusion that is mahāmudrā. Then besides those powers, called *siddhi*, the Dzokchenpa has minor powers like extrasensory perception and ability to manipulate "external" phenomena—psychokinesis—that are termed *ṛddhi*. There is no inducement to explain the nature of these powers to the sceptically inclined. The sceptic must make the commitment himself and discover experientially the nature of "magic."

The Dzokchenpa, however, is not at all a puritan. No vow inhibits him from sensual indulgence or intellectual creativity. No action of body, speech or mind is forbidden him, and his sainthood is attained by means other than conformity to moral laws.

Detachment from every situation and compassion for every sentient being without exception are the signs of his achievement. Again, detachment is not to be understood as distant diffidence or dispassionate indifference. The scriptural definition moulds the word as "without identification with or separation from." The actor, the action, and the acted upon are a clear and delightful unitary perception about which the perceiver has an unequivocal attitude of detachment. This prevents involuntary involvement and permits the spontaneous motivating thrust of compassion to determine the feeling-tone communicated. The unbroken stream of compassionate detachment is the attitude that outsiders see as sainthood, if the result of the action is perceived as virtuous. To the Dzokchenpa both socially acceptable and non-conventional acts are equally valid means of transmitting joy and awareness. If his karma is so pure that his activity is restricted to conventional virtue, then he will not only be a saint in the mahāyāna sense but to Christian perception as well. From the Dzokchen standpoint his continuous, compassionate awareness is his great achievement.

The Dzokchenpa in any culture is a traveller, a voyager in psychic spaces. In western civilization, where adventure to alien shores, with or without weapons, has always absorbed the inclination to delve into the unknown, the age of terrestrial exploration is over. There is nothing left to explore but inner and outer space. This century has seen a radical intensification of interest in the human mind, and particularly to maps of the psyche drawn by Asians, whose introversive aspirations have been given maximal social support for millennia. The Dzokchen explorer faces the most dangerous path and the most rewarding goal. So the predicament of a lone space-voyager faced by hostile, disembodied foes on a distant planet may be applied as an analogue germane to the neophyte Dzokchenpa's career. The Dzokchenpa's milieu is like space because there is nothing substantial in his universe; there are no concrete points of reference to guide him, no infallible dogma to give his intellect

structure or support, and no systematic metaphysical charts to guide him. As in space, there is no upside or downside and no center or circumference to his mandala, and there is no spiritual gravity to pull him down to earth should he fall. The space-voyager's fear of the vast immensity that is his environment is similar to the Dzokchenpa's apprehensive consciousness floating in the endless expanse of inner space. A voyager or explorer he certainly is, because he left all known mental and spiritual territory behind him when he committed himself to his samayas, allowing himself to be guided by his spontaneous response to the needs of all sentient beings and the constant imperative to maintain full awareness. He is alone because no matter how close he is to family or dharma-friends, and regardless of the density of other beings around him, he must always take complete responsibility for his own actions and accept the karma of others as if it were his own. At the same time he refuses every offer of complicity and the companionship that shares karmic effect.

The illusion of hostility is a common ambience in which the lone-travelling novice on the path finds himself until he learns how to become invisible and how to transform negative elements into friendly aids on the way. Since public morality must remain subservient to the imperatives that keep his samaya intact, if any vicious, socially unacceptable propensities remain, inevitably he will find himself an outsider in the time-honoured tradition of the sadhu and mystic. This may entail living an alternative, or perhaps deviant, life-style on the fringes of society, forever the scapegoat for the guilty moralist and the self-motivated critic demanding an homogenous and conformist society. Listen to the western-educated Indian unload his guilt upon the poor Hindu sadhu! Even if his socially negative karmas have been exhausted in past lives, regardless of the success of the shape-shifting stratagems that give him the appearance of conformity, the divergences in the form of the yogin's inner space set him apart. This leaves him open to the paranoias

that beset lone individualists. His realization, which maintenance of samaya inevitably brings, elevates him above the level where hostile forces are embodied and seen as hostile men and women. He lives in a world of spiritual powers or psychological forces where it is imperative that a mirror-like clarity of mind is maintained, the better to identify and transfix the enemy.

The Dzokchenpa is also a warrior. This is not a traditional concept in any Buddhist sect of any country (except perhaps Japan), but if the use of such a concept as the spiritual warrior serves to elucidate the dharma and attract the warrior's mind to the path, then its use is justified. Certainly, on any level of Buddhism other than the Inner Tantra the concept would be inimical to the basic precept of *ahiṁsā* (nonviolence); but in the Inner Tantra it has some validity. In the past it was not thought anomalous in Hindu Tantra that sadhus should be formed into a fighting force, and indeed specific sadhu orders became the martial protectors of *sanatanam dharam* in the face of Muslim aggression. There is little scope for such crass literality of interpretation in Buddhist Tantra, and certainly for the Dzokchenpa conflict, war, killing and slaughter occur only on a metaphysical plain. The Dzokchen warrior is armed with two highly efficacious weapons and he maintains some important allies. His principal weapons are the *phurbu* and *katvaṅga*.[34] The phurbu is a *dorje* (vajra-sceptre) with the blade of a dagger at one end. The *ngakpa*, the Tibetan Dzokchenpa warrior, arrayed in the garb demanded by such a super-ritualized society, carries a symbolic phurbu in his belt, the blades never sharpened, the point as dull as a dog's hind leg. The function of the phurbu is to transfix demons and spirits, liberating them into the space that is their essence. The dorje represents emptiness and awareness, and it is the Dzokchenpa's penetrating insight into the nature of all things as emptiness that is represented by the point of the dagger. The master's enemies are delusive emotional poisons and thoughtforms, neuroses and complexes, generated by a dark corner remaining in his own mind or

created by another being's ignorant mind. They are psychological functions that appear to have lives of their own to the extent that superstitious human beings propitiate them both ritually and in the course of their daily life and communication with others. Struck by a phurbu they dissolve into nothingness, while the minds that possessed them, having experienced a taste of the emptiness that liberated the spirit, are freed in catharsis.

A synonym of these spiritual forces that are the yogin's enemies is the evocatively onomatopoeic Tibetan word "gek," which means literally "obstacle," "hindrance" or "obstruction." In both ritual observance and meditation the yogin devotes considerable time to exercises invoking and destroying *geks*,[35] so that during the periods between meditation he can spontaneously effect the destruction of whatever obstacles of this nature arise in his path. Geks arise, complete their pernicious tasks, and vanish, with the speed of a changing thought-form, and there is no time for considered thought and action. Certainly, geks are mainly of diminutive size and mere sight of the phurbu or dorje is sufficient to dissolve them. But phenomena of the same psychological category can possess an individual to the extent that an observer is convinced that the being possessed and the spirit are one, and this perception, by society at large or by even the afflicted being's close friends, can doom the sufferer to the asylum.

It is the Dzokchenpa Bodhisattva's role to exorcise such spirits: his kind alone in society possesses the skilful means. When the nature of the demon or complex is relatively benign but resides continuously in a fragment of the psyche of a man who refuses to acknowledge its presence, it may be the duty of the Dzokchenpa gently to bring the possessed individual to the recognition that is the prelude to liberation of the spirit. When the spirit is hostile and the proximity of the insight that can destroy it excites it and its host to aggressive behaviour towards the bearer of the awareness, the Dzokchenpa—the warrior—is forced to engage the enemy with its host as its protector and agent. In such a situation the danger to the

Dzokchenpa lies in the tendency to forget that the host is the sufferer and a victim and so become negatively attached to his own aggression—"to take it personally" as we say—thus becoming impotent to exorcise the spirit.

The liberation of spirits is a function of the Dzokchenpa as exorcist as much as warrior. It must be stressed that although the warrior distinguishes between friend and foe, his attitude towards them both is determined by the same compassion. The compassion towards a friend implies application of a different form of skilful means, but the motivation is identical. Another way of saying it is that the wrathful face that the Dzokchenpa turns towards hostile beings or spirits is as compassionate as the peaceful mien he shows his friends. The detachment that is neither identification nor separation is the key to this conundrum. So "exorcist" is no mean label; it implies the full detached skill and compassion of the Dzokchen yogin.

The life-stories of the Great Guru, Guru Rimpoche, are replete with stories of his successful liberation of petty spirits and his subjugation of gods and demons that would serve the dharma as guardians and allies. The monk and abbot Śāntarakṣita, invited by King Trisong Detsen to ordain the first Tibetan monks and build a monastery, was unable to suppress the *nāga*-serpents and *yakṣa*-elementals that possessed the ground and building materials. Guru Rimpoche, the warrior-sadhu, subjugated the myriad Tibetan gods and demons as well as their Bonpo shaman devotees whom he encountered as he approached Samye from Nepal, before clearing the area around Samye of all aggressive forces. Afterwards he visited all the major mountains in Tibet to suppress the powerful mountain gods, and he also made pilgrimage to the lakes wherein dwelt the life-spirits of the country.[36] The victorious Indian sadhu travelling alone in the vast empty spaces and treacherous mountains of the Tibetan plateau, among nomadic Mongol shamans of an aggressive disposition (these same people were then the conquerors of the whole of Central Asia), presents the archetypal image of the

Dzokchen warrior and exorcist. The ngakpas have maintained the tradition of mendicant Buddhist shamans in Tibet. Since the time of Guru Rimpoche the Tibetans have relied upon the mantric powers of the exorcist to protect them from external danger. Such reliance may not always effect the defeat of an invading army, but it can leave the defenders morally victorious and spiritually unbowed.

The phurbu is the Dzokchenpa's weapon against his enemies, while the katvaṅga is his weapon against his own ego. The Tibetan Buddhist katvaṅga consists of a trident (*triśūla*), the three-pronged "fork" carried by saivite sadhus in India and by the Greek god Poseidon, that pierces the centre of a double dorje on a horizontal plane, a "vase of eternal youth" filled with the elixir of immortality, and three human heads below the three prongs. The double dorje, or crossed vajras,[37] is the emblem of the karma-family (at the northern direction of the mandala), signifying perfect action accomplished spontaneously for all sentient beings. The trident itself by its form indicates the unity of the trinity. The trinity is the three existential modes of the Buddha—*dharmakāya, saṁbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*—and the unity is the Buddha himself, sometimes expressed as a fourth "body" or mode, the *svabhāvikakāya*, or the unity of form and emptiness. The three correspond to secret, inner and outer planes of being, and also to ignorance, aversion and desire (although the last two may be transposed circumstantially). Thus the three transfixed heads—the first a blue skull, the second a white "dry" head and the third a red head dripping with blood—represent the Dzokchenpa's recognition of ignorance and sloth, aversion and hatred, and desire and lust, as the three modes of being.[38] It is the katvaṅga of emptiness that pierces the nature of the three principal obstacles to clarity and awareness and transforms them into the primal awareness, radiant clarity and all-embracing compassion of the Buddha's being. Further, it is interesting to note, when Guru Rimpoche was attending Trisong Detsen's court while his consort, the Princess Yeshe Tsogyel was banished, the katvaṅga

was the form into which the Guru transformed her so that he should always have her with him. Thus the katvaṅga of emptiness and primal awareness is the Dzokchenpa's consort, as well as his most potent weapon. In the warrior's perpetual battle to penetrate every obstacle to his enlightenment with emptiness, he has this consort as his constant support.

Transformation, as alteration from an inferior to a superior status, from ignorance to knowledge, and so forth, is not a concept consonant with Dzokchen atiyoga. The reason is that all things from the very beginning are pure and complete in the universal ground of being. "Recognition" is the term germane to description of the awakening process of the Dzokchenpa. Thus the five poisons are not to be transformed. They are to be recognized for what they are and what they have always been: the five aspects of primal awareness. Furthermore, recognition is achieved by withdrawing consciousness from the stressful mental functions of dualization, relaxing into the original nature of the mind, and getting behind the mindscape so full of objects of potential attachment. If he does not fall into an effective pattern of meditation drawn by the instinct that constantly directs him towards maturing experience, there are various techniques that the Dzokchen neophyte may be taught by his Lama to assist recognition of his emotions as aspects of awareness. The recognition can be affected in meditation in the crucible of the mind by provoking emotion and then penetrating its Emptiness with the insight that has been developed in "insight meditation."[39]

A more direct and forcible method is through the practice called *chod*:[40] here the yogin repairs to a desolate and fearsome power-place, such as a charnel ground or the habitation of ferocious demons such as flesh-eaters, spirits of disease, malicious ḍākinīs, and so forth. Then preparing his mind with mantra and music, identifying with the yidam, he invites the spirits to attack him. The four demon-spirits[41] are those specifically invoked in the tradition

of Machik Labdron, an eleventh- to twelfth-century Tibetan yogini who established the principal chod lineage in Tibet. Machik practised sexual yoga, and these four demons, particularly, of course, the devil of emotional passion, are the bane of highly sexed yogins. But through exercise in this yoga, the yogin or yogini is rendered safe when he or she must spontaneously respond to the demons evoked in a passionate relationship conducted in the course of sādhana. Practitioners of this technique are frequently psychologically and physically mauled, but the greatest warriors of chod become adept in the transformation (recognition or release) of every emotional and spiritual force. Particularly, since the transformation of spirits of disease implies a self-cure, chodpas become immune to illness and learn the art of healing in the process. The Lama will emphasize the folly of evoking passion in the mainstream of life, no matter what altruistic motive inspires the Bodhisattva neophyte, until one of the practices of cutting attachment described above, or a similar yoga, has been successfully accomplished.

In the initial phase of practice, probably the period immediately following discovery of a Lama, it is most advantageous to spend time in retreat, or better still, as a monk or nun in retreat. In such a space a solid foundation can be laid, beneficial habits can be developed, and the mind can be established in the purity affected by the initiation received from the Lama. Most of us must practice no-meditation and no-action in the form of simple purificatory techniques. Further down the path, in freedom from expectation of results, we can assimilate the whole of life's potential into our practice. Intense intimacy, emotional harmony and trust, and spiritual attunement, can be developed to an optimal degree in a passionate, sensually interactive relationship, which thus provides one of the most effective situations in which to practise and learn. No better occasion may arise to develop the Bodhisattva's responsiveness. The cynic may laugh because the primary universal motivation, sexual pleasure, which he considers all in all to all, including

the Dzokchen-Bodhisattva, is not given primacy here. Of course sexual desire is the starting point. The sexual centre is the seat of our vital energy[42] and of Kuṇḍalinī herself, and the more intense, sustained and object-less is sexual desire the better. But what must be simultaneous with the arousal of desire is the penetrating insight into desire as emptiness; and the motivation that springs from empty awareness of desire is the Bodhisattva's aspiration of selfless service. The pure pleasure, *dewachenpo, mahāsukha*, that is to be found within sexual interaction—which is indeed found if the adept's yoga has been effective and if negative karma is not to be gleaned from the encounter—is the inevitable fruit of all our labour; but pleasure must never be the conscious motivation. If this moment is to be prostituted to the next, if a relationship is motivated from the beginning by a selfish desire, if lust is not recognized as emptiness and attachment not destroyed, then the seeds of disaster are sown. Although some physical pleasure is obtained, the result of the relationship may be a break in samaya and an eternity in the Dorje Nyelwa.[43] Retribution can take the most violent and sadistic forms; and the negative propensity to repeat the experience, despite the retribution, will become increasingly hard to resist, until a downward spiral destroys all hope of even a human rebirth, let alone a rainbow body. The craving for mahāsukha, dewachenpo, pure pleasure, kills all chance of attaining it. The yogin enters a sexual encounter without any hopes or fear, simply enjoying the play of magical illusion, allowing the ramifications of spontaneity to manifest for the sake of all sentient beings.

Non-action is the key to existential involvement in all passionate situations—a sexual encounter, an angry interaction, a proud stance in competition, or a jealous rivalry. The apparent illogicality of the progression of passionate mental events in the karmic stream is reflected in the superficially structureless nature of the course of the adept's life. When the starting point is a turning around in the seat of consciousness and commitment to the ultimate Dzokchen

samaya, and the goal is a rainbow body, there is no systematic path. At the starting point, when no doubt the aspirant will first experience the spontaneously arising dictates of responsiveness, karmic cause and effect will still be operative. Even initiation will not necessarily destroy the habits of a lifetime or be changed by an immutable conviction that there is a higher vision. So, at the beginning of the path, motivation will be mixed with non-motivation. This will lead to some confusion as periods of unsatisfactory horizontal, karmically determined action will seem to dominate the moments of eternal, resuscitating vertical effusion that seemingly are few and far between.

The Goal

Insofar as Buddhahood is inexpressible and inconceivable it would be best to omit any verbal comment upon it. However, the following epigrams, stated or implied in the foregoing commentary, have been useful to me as koans, verbal paradoxes, that point directly at the goal.

> Only a Buddha can recognize a Buddha.
>
> The Lama is every moment of perception: all vision is his body, all sound is his speech and all pure awareness is his mind.
>
> Nothing exists that is not a function of mind.
>
> Nothing is evil or undesirable but evil thought makes it so *(Honi soit qui mal y pense)*.
>
> The starting point is the path is the goal.
>
> Anything that promotes certainty in the middle way is the only path.
>
> Form is emptiness and emptiness is form.

II. THE LANGUAGE OF DZOKCHEN

If at the beginning there is a viable basis of understanding between Lama and disciple on a nonverbal level, still there may be many problems of communication in the conceptual realm. The notion of secrecy can be one such stumbling block. The "secret" or "mystic" dimension is the third in a triadic hierarchy of categories completed by the "outer" and "inner" dimensions. These categories define the relationship between hīnayāna, prajñāpāramitāyāna and tantrayāna, for example. In metaphysical analysis they classify, for instance, the Buddha's Body, Speech and Mind and the three modes or bodies of Buddha's being: nirmāṇakāya, saṁbhogakāya and dharmakāya. In Tantra, what pertains to the secret or mystic dimension remains forever secret in the same way that subatomic particles remain hidden from sensory perception. It is impossible to divulge the Buddha's Mind, or the dharmakāya, outside its own frame of reference.

However, in Tantra there are injunctions against the initiate revealing the Guru's precepts transmitted at the time of initiation. It may be destructive to the faith and comprehension of the initiate on a different level of practice if he is regaled with precepts irrelevant to his mind-state. For the non-initiate who may be sympathetic to the teaching, it is futile and perhaps destructive to inform his mind with a structure that is significant only after initiation has provided a framework. Lastly, although no harm can be done to the ultimate truth of Tantra, there is the danger of an outsider, either through honest miscomprehension, or through devious twisting of meaning and rearrangement of context, representing what is sublime and intelligent as something vulgar and stupid. At worst this can provoke persecution of initiates, or it can create prejudice and partiality in social consciousness. However, the most important reason for keeping the Guru's precepts secret is to maintain the yogin's integrity during the process of realization: exposure

of samayas outside heart-secrecy will inevitably introduce obstacles to their fulfilment.

The "initiate" in the above context refers to an individual who has experiential knowledge of the goal of Tantra. The "outsider" is a person with blinkered vision unable or unready to enter the path, whose spiritual development is limited by mindsets and beliefs labelled as "hedonistic," "realistic," "nihilistic" or "eternalistic."[44] Thus an individual who has had mere formal initiation into the tradition may in fact have a non-initiate's vision and may be negatively influenced by secret revelations. On the contrary, the individual who receives initiation spontaneously and informally outside a practice lineage may gain enormous benefit from fortuitously obtained "secrets." In general, regarding the propagation of Dzokchen instruction outside the framework of a Guru-disciple relationship, in the light of the inscrutable level of forever secret mystic realities, and insofar as the current social climate is sympathetic to gnostic traditions, most contemporary Dzokchen Lamas teach and actively support the public dissemination of their lineages' truths.

This discussion of secrecy has introduced the "secret" or "mystic dimension," and in the context of the highest, Inner Tantra,[45] Dzokchen, or atiyoga, is the secret level, anuyoga the inner level and mahāyoga the outer level. Dzokchen's "secrecy" is a corollary of its ineffable nature, and, therefore, the adjectives that describe the state of being that is Dzokchen are strained to capture its ambience. In fact, there is little compromise with the statement that the goal is beyond the intellect to comprehend—it is inexpressible. Adjectives employed to evoke this inexpressible existential condition, are indicators of the direction in which the yogin must go to attain it. "Naked, stripped, stark"; "direct, immediate, here and now"; and "natural, simple, pure, uncontrived, unelaborated": are three strings of such didactic terms. These words indicate the lack of any conceptual screen between the yogin and his experience, the absence of any judgment about the elements of the situation that confront

him, and the absence of preconceptions about the nature of reality in general. Any discursive mental activity obscures pure perception. However, all these statements are examples of the glib, devaluing expression that the precept enjoining the yogin to abhor such attempts at rationalization aims at precluding. There is comfort in these statements, but such intellectual support is to be avoided if the full force of reality is to be experienced in a thoughtfree state. This point is made here in order to stress that the language of the path is structured with intention to induce transcendence of itself, which is an aspect of the goal.

There is little new in the metaphysical concepts of Dzokchen to the student versed in mahāyāna philosophy. One of the best and most accessible sources through which an understanding of the basic concepts of Dzokchen can be obtained is Saraha's *dohas*.[46] The concepts are identical, the terminology is different and the patterns and the angle on the patterns—the way in which aspects are related to create a dynamic and a path—are different. Despite the differences, Saraha demonstrates not only the experiential proximity of the mahāmudrā siddhas of the Ganges Valley to the Dzokchen siddhas of northwestern India and Tibet, but also the transcultural nature of nondual experience.

In this analysis the traditional structure inevitably formulated as stages of the path is avoided. The nature of the traditional form is "inevitable" because the structure and its parts gain meaning only in the light of Dzokchen's liberating, soteriological dynamic, the forward drive from ignorance to awareness, from obscurity to light. This continuous awakening progresses along a path of meditation that becomes increasingly formless and inexpressible as experience more and more approximates the ultimate ineffable goal. The analysis by stages with its implication of linear temporal development has its limitation in that the Dzokchen dynamic operates outside time in a field of synchronicity. However, divorced from the graduated structure, Dzokchen terms tend to become dead counters

in a futile, spiritually obstructive semantic game, for they describe mystic experience that cannot be exposed to the common light of day without devaluation and dilution of meaning. Nevertheless, this is an attempt to describe Dzokchen terms in a continuing effort to find valid English equivalents, preferably with enriching connotations drawn from the western tradition. Not that Dzokchen terminology is metaphysically abstruse. The terms that in the context of a Dzokchen song or liturgy are so evocative of the states they represent are found to be prosaic when extracted from their context. "Space," "light" and "awareness" are the three concepts most frequently employed in Dzokchen texts.

The mental activity alienating human beings from immediate, direct experience is referred to frequently in Dzokchen texts as the dualizing function of the mind. First, separation is made between subject and object, the perceiver identifying himself with an egoic consciousness that perceives an isolated, external other. Introversively, in the same way, he alienates himself from aspects of his own being. With a basis in this fundamental dualistic structure, verbal expression gains its meanings from abstract linguistic relationships. In dualistic philosophies, where "ignorance" is rationalized as an acceptable norm or idealized for the purpose of manipulating "objective reality," valid meaning can only be discovered in the sphere of relativity, in the sphere of objective duality. This statement is framed in "the law of the excluded middle." Dzokchen insists unequivocally that on the path of gnostic awareness meanings informed outside the excluded middle are spurious and deviant and that reliance upon such meanings exacerbates the painful alienation associated with continuous transmigration.

What the excluded middle represents in Dzokchen is described analogically by the mandala. Consider the meaning of nonduality[47] in terms of this mandala. The excluded middle is the nondual space wherein direct, immediate perception is experienced: in a moment of pure perception there is no distinction between the sensory

object, the sense organ and the consciousness that is aware of sensation. Since the consciousness of the psycho-organism is capable of only serial, linear perception (although a subconscious strata constantly synthesizes the streams of data produced by all five senses), when there is full concentration at the door of one specific sense the mental commentary of "the observer" is silenced for a moment. So, in such direct sensory perception, there is intimation of nondual experience. In the next moment this experience becomes less than perfect if the perceiver's clarity of awareness is clouded by either emotivity provoked by the sense object or by mental interference. The mental veil may here be defined as the (muted) chatter of mental apparatus engaged in the preparation of a "linguistic definition" of the perception. Even at the moment of direct perception when gnostic awareness of emptiness as form and form as emptiness is experienced, the mind is preparing to dualize the situation. Only when there is no emotional attachment to the object of perception and when the mind is still, emptied of all discursive thought, can a legitimate paradigm of nondual, direct perception obtain. The centre of the mandala represents the emptiness of the perceptual situation—there is no substantial essence in subject, object or their interaction. The field of the mandala represents the form—visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory or, indeed, mental. Emptiness and form comprise a unity in the same way that the centre and circumference of the circle are inseparable. The indivisible relationship between such polarities are called nondual, and ramifications of this unity that may not be evident are both the beauty of Dzokchen expression and our linguistic hurdle when approaching these texts.

How is this nondual direct sensory experience verbally articulated? Evidently it is not to be done in the manner of ignorant, dualistic expression. But it has to be done with the same vocabulary and grammar. The sacred languages of Tibetan and Sanskrit provide vocabularies sanctified by scripture and the poetry of the adepts of

secret cults. The profane language of commerce and science is ill-suited to adaptation to this purpose, although science is increasingly able to provide terminology that compensates for its lack of poetic beauty by a precision of abstract concept. Some commentators retain Tibetan or Sanskrit terms, and some use the typographical device of putting the initial letters of prosaic words in the upper case to imply a higher order of meaning. Certainly, insofar as grammar and patterns of meanings reflect mind's intrinsic psychological structure, its habits of perception and its levels of awareness, the Dzokchen vision would ideally require a new form of language. As an increasing number of English-speaking Dzokchen adepts intuitively adapt the material at hand, this language will evolve.

The sacred language of the tantras is mantra: this means that the syllables that comprise a word resonate to a pitch that evokes the prototypical nature of the form that is being articulated. When the master is questioned on this point he is evasive regarding the specific relationship between sound and form. But there is no ignoring his conviction that sound is intimately related to the realm of form and has the power to affect it. The Indian story of one of the great *uṣṭad* sitarists of an earlier generation, whose instrument burst into flame during a perfect rendition of a fire raga, is explained in terms of the *uṣṭad*'s ability to reproduce the sound of the seed-syllable of the element fire precisely, so creating fire itself. However, it is a general principle in many sacred traditions that it is not so much the form of the consonants as the power and thoughtform inserted into the vowel sound by a master, a siddha, that is efficacious. That the resonance that vibrates in an inanimate object, such as a fine wine glass, a conch shell, or a singing-bowl, is of the nature of vowels rather than consonants supports this notion. Meditative experience indicates that the sacred language of Dzokchen is effective in inducing the states of mind that are evoked. It is imperative that we take great care in selecting the equivalents of these terms in English.

Frequently the need to render the form of a meaning exactly takes precedence over aesthetic demands.

A definition of one radical Dzokchen term—nonduality—has already been offered. The paradox of expressing the nondual in dualistic terms is parallel to experience of the relative world in a nondual mode. The next term to be discussed is the synonym of nonduality that indicates that nonduality encompasses duality and that we know nonduality only through a specific mode of awareness that unites polarities and gives the relative world a unity. This term is literally translated as "two-in-oneness," "co-incidence," or "arising as a pair."[48] Since absolute nondual reality itself—emptiness—pervades the relative world and does not exist independent of it, the "co-incident pair" of space and Knowledge is given as the primary level of reality. "Space"[49] is best conceived as the universal, all-pervasive field. Like emptiness itself, it is nothing separate from form, and yet nothing else but it exists. All form is space: thus it is possible for siddhas who have dissolved the constituents of their body-mind in space, identifying with it, to walk through walls and eat rock. "Space" is no cold, vacuous void. It is the richness of the Goddess Mahāmāyā, and all the playfulness and energy of the Ḍākinī. "Knowledge"[50] is an epistemological synonym of emptiness and the cognitive aspect of space. Again, since the epistemological absolute cannot exist independent of its objective constituent, it is not separate from the sensory fields that constitute ordinary knowledge. For this reason it is translated as Knowledge.

Knowledge (*rigpa*) is probably the single most significant term in Dzokchen, and it is peculiar to Dzokchen. It is found in the Dohas of the mahāmudrā siddhas, but generally the term "pure awareness"[51] is preferred there, where it is used as a synonym of Knowledge. In Dzokchen the compound phrase Knowledge-Awareness[52] (or "the Awareness of Knowledge," where Awareness is the less comprehensive constituent) indicates both the "objective" and "subjective" aspects of Emptiness as the universe (or *dharmadhātu*) in terms of

Awareness. Since sensory consciousness is constantly active, the movement of Knowledge-Awareness is referred to figuratively as a dance, and since Knowledge-Awareness is represented figuratively and anthropomorphically as the Ḍākinī, the constant movement of Knowledge is called "the Dance of the Ḍākinī." But it would be incorrect to characterize Knowledge-Awareness as inherently active, as it is essentially a field co-extensive with Space. Perhaps the best image by which to describe it is that of a whirling firebrand: the body that twirls it remains still, while the whirling flame on the end of the stick creates the impression of a static wheel of fire. Fire is symbolic of dynamic cognition.

If space (*dbyings, dhātu*) and awareness (*ye shes, jñāna*) are the co-incident pair that form the essence of reality, the nature of reality is light.[53] Again, this light is co-extensive with Emptiness, Space and Knowledge, and insofar as it is inseparable from its forms in the same way that the light of the sun is inseparable from its source, it is best conceived as a field of lightform in potential. It is for this reason that *selwa* can be translated as "luminosity" and "clarity." "Luminosity" is intended to indicate the abstract quality of light before its emanation, and "clarity" indicates the inherent quality of lightform. Although the image of the sun and its beams adequately conveys the relationship between light and its manifest qualities, the image fails insofar as the sun is a substantial entity, whereas the source of lightform is empty space.

The final attribute of emptiness to be mentioned is a quality peculiar to the Buddhist analysis: responsiveness. It is the third and final denominator in the list of categories or aspects by which emptiness can be defined: essence, nature, responsiveness.[54] It appears anomalous, an attribute rather than a category. The third logical category is "function," or "manifest function," and the attribute found in its stead is responsiveness and its qualifier is "all-pervasive."[55] Viewed as a functional attribute of space, Knowledge

and light, the implication is that the dynamic, the intentionality, the purpose of being, is compassion, which is a synonym of responsiveness and demonstrable as the responsive aspect of love, and it is this compassion that is co-extensive with space, the heart of the Buddha pervading all beings. Viewed as the potential form or manifestation of emptiness, the implication appears to be that every vibration of body, speech and mind is a form of compassionate energy, nothing excluded. Consider the distinction between responsiveness and compassion. In Dzokchen, compassion is much more than the virtue of loving kindness.[56] Nor does the word compassion in the Dzokchen context denote its English etymological meaning, "suffering together" or "empathy," although both these meanings may be inferred. Essentially, compassion indicates an open and receptive mind responding spontaneously to the exigencies of an ever-changing field of vibration to sustain the optimal awareness that serves self-and-others' ultimate desire for liberation and well-being. The conventional meaning of compassion denotes the latter, active part of this definition, and, due to the accretions of Christian connotation, response is limited to specifically virtuous activity. "Responsiveness" defines the origin and cause of selfless activity that can encompass all manner of response. On this nondual Dzokchen path virtue is the effect, not the cause; the ultimate compassionate response is whatever action maximizes Knowledge—loving kindness is the automatic function of Awareness.

The terms defined above are all synonyms of emptiness and aspects of emptiness like facets of a jewel. If reality is all creation, then just as the universe, the cosmos, all things under the sun and the totality, give inclusive definitions, so do emptiness, space, light, Knowledge and responsiveness—they are simply different names for the same ineffable reality. Each indicates a different aspect useful in developing a vision of the path and expressing experience along it. To the yogin they are sacred and secret words that should never be bandied about in idle metaphysical gossip lest the power

to evoke their reality is lost. The reality they evoke is to be considered more precious and more worthy of respect than any particular god; the power these words represent is more potent than nuclear fission and more subtly efficacious than all the miracles of the siddhas. They describe the ultimate mode of being, the ultimate body of Buddha, the dharmakāya. There is nothing but the dharmakāya to the Dzokchen master, and the paradox, which in itself is a powerful Dzokchen koan, is that the Dzokchen master appears as an ordinary human being and his immediate environment, his mandala, has the same form as our own.

Emptying the Depths of Hell

Emptying the Depths of Hell

by Guru Chowong

Introduction

Guru Rimpoche Choki Wongchuk, or Guru Chowong, is one of the greatest names among the treasure-finders or *tertons* (*gter ston*). He lived in the thirteenth century (1212–1280) and heralded a major revival in the Nyingma School. His epithet "The Second Guru Rimpoche," whence his title is derived, is given to only a small elite of Nyingma School yogins. He was the second of the Sovereign Treasure-finders and the second of the Three Supreme Emanations of Guru Rimpoche.[57] He is also said to be an incarnation of the Buddha's Speech. This array of superior qualifications entitled him to a Ḍākinī of similar first rank attainment, and he found her in the first of the two Tibetan yoginis possessing all the marks and signs of the Ḍākinī[58]—Jomo Menmo Padma Tsokyi (1248–1283), an emanation of Yeshe Tsogyel.

Guru Chowong was born in western Lhodrak, midway between the Bhutan border and Yamdrok Lake, where his family had lived for generations. The residence, in Layak Village, in which he spent most of his life is called Guru Lhakhang. He was a scion of the Pang family. The founder of the Pang lineage, Pangje Tsentram, was honoured by King Trisong Detsen for destroying the Bon Magician Nyaring, who had attempted to kill the King by hurling meteors at him from the Bon stronghold on top of Hepori, above Samye Chokhor, during the great king's persecution of the Bon shamans. Pangje's son settled in western Lhodrak in Layak, and his seed produced a famous line of Bodhisattva tantrikas.

Guru Chowong's education was eclectic. His father taught him

Dzokchen, Chakchen (mahāmudrā), Zije and Chod, the highest meditations of all schools, and he became highly accomplished in the yogas of Dorje Phurba (Vajrakīlaya) and Shinjeshe (Mañjushrī Yamāntaka). But apart from his vast formal book-learning, he obtained direct experiential knowledge and empowerment from meditative experience and dream-vision. The discovery of his principal treasure-trove was attended by amazing visions. He had obtained two lists of hiding places, one originating with Drapa Ngonshe,[59] which had caused disaster to many incompetents who had attempted to retrieve the treasure, and a list of twice-hidden books that he had found himself. The nine-headed serpent-demon and awareness-ḍākinī protectors took the form of a human woman to give Guru Chowong the keys to the treasure-house. As he opened the door a gigantic vulture (Garuda) emerged, and recognizing it as the essence of the treasure he mounted it and flew to the thirteenth stage of enlightenment, where he found a tent of rainbow light and Dorje Sempa (Vajrasattva), who initiated him into the "creativity of Knowledge"[60] and presented him with a flask full of the nectar of immortality. Then from the treasure-house cave he withdrew two large chests containing 108 volumes of secret instruction and an enormous hollow statue of the protecting serpent-demon containing four sets of general instruction. This treasure of Namkechan,[61] the Drakmar Cave of Chimphu above Samye Chokhor, was the first of his nineteen discoveries made at power-places throughout Central and Southern Tibet: at Lhodrak Kharchu, Samye Chokhor, Samye Drakmar Drinzang, Mon Bumthang, Tsang Tsi Nesar, Samye Hepori, Rong Drak and Kyabo, and at many minor sites as well.

Guru Chowong's vision of his spiritual father, demonstrating his clear visionary capacity is also germane to our text. Two young girls guided him on a winged white horse to the sphere of Guru Rimpoche's present residence—Ngayab Zangdok Peri, the Copper Coloured Mountain Paradise of Ngayab in the Southwest. Here Orgyen Rimpoche transmitted to him the empowerment of the

Eight Logos Mandates called the Consummate Secret. He also received specific advice instructing him to follow the Bodhisattva path and to teach sentient beings. (At this time, as intermittently throughout Tibetan history, the temptation for Nyingma School yogins to sell their magical power for personal gain was a particularly potent force for negative karma.) Guru Chowong was then returned to his ordinary state of consciousness on a shield of dazzling light.

It appears that the bulk of Guru Chowong's treasure-texts have been lost. Jamgon Kongtrul Rimpoche, whose lifework in the nineteenth century included gathering, editing and ordering the once potent works of tertons of centuries past and publishing them in his voluminous compendium called the *Rinchen Terdzo,* found only a few volumes of Guru Chowong's treasures. Among them were *The Consummate Secret of the Eight Logos Mandates* and *Emptying the Depths of Samsara,* which includes *The Wrathful and Peaceful Deities of the Spontaneously Originated Eight Fierce Logos Deities: The Rite of Confession and Restoration of the Samaya while Emptying the Depths of Hell.*[62] *The Sovereign Rite of Confession Atoning for Breaches and Breaks of the Samaya and Expiating All Errors and Faults,* known by its short title *Emptying the Depths of Hell* (*Narak Dongdruk*),[63] is a litany written by Jamgon Kongtrul, in the nineteenth century, based upon the two treasure-texts of Guru Chowong mentioned above. Thus seven hundred years after Guru Chowong's death his highly potent "secret mantra"[64] texts are again in full use by the lineal initiates of the eclectic Red Hat lamas. It is a well known and highly respected Nyingma School litany.

The first section of the rite begins with the yogin visualizing in front of him the Lama who embodies the hundred Wrathful and Peaceful Deities. The yogin then invokes the Wrathful and Peaceful Deities, calling them by name and offering obeisance with reverence. The Great Treasure-finder assures the practitioner that merely by sounding the names of the deities with homage and respect the full effect of the rite is achieved. Verbal acknowledgement of specific

faults and breaks in the vow has the same effect. Then relaxing in meditation the yogin recites the Hundred Syllable Mantra (the *yigya*), Vajrasattva's mantra of confession, with the certainty that eight hundred repetitions in a single sitting confers rebirth as a Bodhisattva. There follows acknowledgement of the yogin's failure to maintain the Root and Branch Vows, the tantric samayas,[65] thereby restoring these commitments. The next part of the rite is the Dzokchen confession which is included herein. This concludes the litany. As addenda, verses are included to be recited with offering of the butter lamp, the skullcup of grain, the *rakta* and the *torma-cakes* during the eucharistic sacrament when the confession is included as part of the rite of *gaṇacakra*. Again the purpose is restoration of the samaya. The entire rite is composed of a series of techniques that guarantee atonement and refulfilment of the samaya.

How can admission of error and "sin" be part of Dzokchen practice? Confession is a process of mental and spiritual purification indispensable to mental and spiritual well-being. On a mundane level the pressures of guilt are released, liberating festering cankers in the subconscious mind. On a transcendental level confession is an acknowledgement of undesirable, repressed mindforms with coincident recognition of their nature as emptiness and liberation. If guilts, errors and faults are thoughtforms to which the subconscious is negatively attached, then they may be visualized as spirits or ghosts of past experience lurking in dark and murky corners of the mind. Then confession is self-induced exorcism effecting liberation[66] of these spirits. When the mind is completely empty of these spirits—black, grey or white—and when every experience whatsoever arises fully into awareness leaving no trace, "like the flight-path of a bird in the sky,"[67] then the mind is fully liberated. As our text states, the "sin" and the "sinner" are one: when the undesirable thoughtform is released the mind of the penitent is also liberated. "Sin" in this context is defined as an action that is not immediately released and dissolved upon its inception. If the mind is innocent and insight into all

experience as emptiness penetrates each moment of the continuum of reality as it arises, then there is no sin and no sinner but a consummate samaya and Buddhahood. It is our moral and mental preconceptions and biases that obstruct spontaneous insight into events as empty illusion, echo or bubbles on the surface of the ocean, and that produce what Buddhists call sin. All ignorant sentient beings, and all yogins whose mindflow of pure awareness is broken, even for a moment, need the rite of confession to atone for their sins.

To atone ("at one" in the Buddhist context) means to identify oneself with the Guru, Deity and Ḍākinī and thus restore the samaya. The rites of confession and samaya restoration invariably come together in tantric practice for they are different sides of the same coin. Confession is to remember, and hence to relive, experience that was not fully understood and whose nature was not penetrated to its true reality. Samaya restoration is to restore the continuity of release of every experience through penetrating insight into emptiness and thus to restore the samaya union with the Guru and Ḍākinī, who represent uninterrupted gnostic awareness. On the relative level, where samaya means vow or oath, after confession of failure to maintain a vow, the vow is taken again and thus restored.

The Root Vows of Body, Speech and Mind are as follows: the Vow of Divine Body is to serve and venerate the Guru and to obey his instruction, to respect the Guru's Consorts and the yogin's vajra brothers and sisters, and to maintain a correct vision of the Guru; the Vow of Divine Speech is to practice visualization and recitation in meditation upon the deity regularly and frequently; the Vow of Divine Mind is to keep the Tantra secret. The Twenty-five Branch Vows are injunctions guiding vision, meditation and action, thus keeping the samaya of union with the Guru, Deity and Ḍākinī intact.

Emptying the Depths of Hell is a mahāyoga text. Virtually all practices associated with the Eight Logos Mandates fall into the mahāyoga category. But since Dzokchen vision is the ultimate perspective on everything that arises, no matter what the form,

Dzokchen practice embraces all the techniques of the hīnayāna, mahāyāna and vajrayāna approaches to Buddhahood. The essential practice of Dzokchen is to penetrate each moment of consciousness with the purifying flame of awareness as it arises, so the successful Dzokchenpa has no need of the confessional rites of the gradual approaches. What is provided for him is confession of lingering traces of dualistic thought-patterns and dichotomous concepts, confession of failure in vision: this is precisely the nature of the verses extracted from *Emptying the Depths of Hell* included here.

However, in this liturgy there is no trace of the terminology of penitent devotee seeking expiation from an external source that would admit a duality of penitent and confessor. The confession is couched in strong affirmative terms strengthening the convictions of Dzokchen vision, and the confessor is a point instant of gnostic awareness of infinite empty space as various aspects of the absolute.[68] This point instant of atonement is a moment in the uninterrupted continuum of naked existential awareness that is neither within nor without. There is no "I" to be the yogin's own confessor, nor any "external," higher plane of being in which the yogin bathes. Each dichotomy is resolved in an immediate, unutterable, non-objectifiable, moment of primal awareness. A sense of contrition is assumed, since contrition is recognition of the absence of continuous Buddhahood, and knowledge of the necessity to atone for one's ignorance. It is also recognition of humility in the face of the divine pride of the moment of atonement and primal awareness. However, instead of contrition toned with self-abnegation and abasement, we have a lament for incorrigible human nature driven by self-destructive desire, ever refusing to see the insubstantial universe as an enchanting magical web of empty illusion, in which Dakas and Ḍākinīs dance in a constant compassionate display of delight and pure pleasure. Alas! What misery! Thus the self-abasement characteristic of the path of renunciation is replaced with an evocation of the Bodhisattva Vow. The "secret mantra" magic of the verses should demonstrate their own efficacy.

FROM "THE SOVEREIGN RITE OF CONFESSION ATONING FOR BREACHES AND BREAKS OF THE SAMAYA AND EXPIATING ALL ERRORS AND FAULTS"[69]

EMPTYING THE DEPTHS OF HELL

HŪNG! How futile to project notions of being and
nonbeing
Upon an unformed and inconceivable reality-continuum!
What misery to cling to delusions of a substantial reality!
Atone in the spaciousness of formless, concept-free pleasure.

How pointless to project notions of purity and impurity
Upon Kuntu Zangpo,[70] who transcends all moral qualities!
How guilt-ridden are those who cling to moral dualities!
Atone in the spaciousness of Kunzang's pure pleasure.

How exhausting to cling to notions of self and others
In the sameness where superiority and inferiority cannot be!
What anxiety to cling to the duality of success and failure!
Atone in the spaciousness of the pure pleasure of sameness.

How futile to cling to concepts of this life and the next
When the Bodhisattva's mind is free of birth and dying!
What anxiety lies in obsession with birth and death!
Atone in the spaciousness of the deathless swastika.[71]

How foolish to project concepts of concrete form and
substance
Upon the cosmic seed that has no corners or edges!
What boredom lies in the limitations of squares and
rectangles!

Atone in the spaciousness of the all-embracing spherical
nucleus.

How stupid it is to project notions of beginning and end
In the timeless, unchangeable dimension of past, present
and future!
What misery lies in the duality of transformation and
gradual change!
Atone in the spaciousness of unchanging past, present and
future.

How pointless to project causal relationships
Upon Awareness, naturally arising without strain or
accomplishment!
What grief lies in distinguishing effort from attainment!
Atone in the spaciousness of effortless spontaneity.

How exhausting to cling to concepts of subject and object
In Knowledge-Awareness neither eternal nor temporal!
What misery to separate time from eternity!
Atone in the spaciousness of Knowledge-Awareness.

How futile it is to hold mental and physical pain distinct
In the formless, pristine reality beyond conception!
What anxiety to separate centre from circumference!
Atone in the spaciousness of the immaculately real.

How pointless the concepts of inside and out
In the Buddha's boundless palace that has no measure!
What folly to differentiate length from breadth!
Atone in the spaciousness without measure or dimension.

How meaningless are the projections of above and below
In the celestial matrix that has no height nor depth!
What foolishness to dualize high and low!
Atone in the spaciousness of the dimensionless yoni.[72]
How exhausting to project notions of inside and out
In the dharmakāya that resolves every duality!
What misery to distinguish vessel and contents!
Atone in the spaciousness of immutable dharmakāya.

How pitiful are sentient beings, deluded and ignorant,
Conceiving fluid, formless events as concrete reality.
Man's bewildered mind—how sadly errant!

In an unborn reality projecting notions of "I" and "mine,"
Failing to see the illusory enchantment of phenomenal
existence,
He lusts after possessions and wealth;
Failing to realize the insubstantiality of samsara
He clings forever to equally deluded friends and relations:
Man's imperceptive intellect—how sadly errant!

Forsaking the value of truth, striving in unhealthy activity,
Ignoring the Exemplar's injunction, beguiled by irrelevant
attractions,
Forgetting the imperative of self-Knowledge, obsessed by
idle pleasures,
How pitiful are sentient beings who have lost their way!
Atone in the spaciousness of nondiscrimination.

The Flight of the Garuda

The Flight of the Garuda

by Shabkar Lama Jatang Tsokdruk Rangdrol

Introduction

The rag-clad, lock-matted, mystic-minstrel hermit of the Tibetan plateau is a potent archetypal figure in the oriental mythic imagination. This figure is embodied in Shabkar Lama, Tsokdruk Rangdrol, author of *The Flight of the Garuda.* Shabkar was not a product of a noble family producing tulkus in each generation—he was of humble origin. Lacking the advantages of a princely education, he was a scholar of the type who wrote from experience, directly from his heart. Living much of his youth in the solitude of cave and hermitage, he practised what he wrote and taught. His biography[73] is replete with stories depicting the magnanimity of a beggar, the humility of a saint without a shred of pretension or affectation, and the good humour and compassion of a man familiar with the hardship of life on the survival line. Although he was initiated into a Nyingma School lineage and order, he had little time for sectarian distinctions and took initiation and instruction from Lamas of every sect. He was a product of the great eclectic revival in eastern Tibet in the nineteenth century.

Shabkar Lama was born in Rekong in Amdo in 1841. The great Khyentse Wongpo, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye and Patrul Rimpoche were his contemporaries among the great figures of the mature blooming of the Eastern Tibetan renaissance. He spent his childhood and youth in the Rekong Gompa.[74] Rekong was a monastery renowned for its yogin-tantrikas, a school of ngakpas, whose feared and respected graduates, with their unshorn hair-knots roamed throughout Tibet, practising ritual magic for villagers

and teaching Tantra and Dzokchen to those ready and willing to learn. At the age of twenty Shabkar took ordination at the Gelukpa gompa of Labrang Tashi Kyil[75] against his family's will and contrary to the custom of Rekong students. But throughout his life he maintained Rekong's ethos, his appearance resembling that of a ngakpa more than that of a gelong, particularly during periods of sustained retreat. His preceptor at Labrang, Jamyang Gyatso, directed him to the Lama who was to be his Root-Lama, a district governor and great Lama named Choki Gyelpo Ngaki Wongpo, who lived near Kokonor Lake. Choki Gyelpo transmitted to him his principal line of initiation into the mandala of Tamdrin (Hayagrīva) and Dorje Phakmo (Vajra Varāhī).[76] Tamdrin and Dorje Phakmo in yabyum became Shabkar's yidam, his personal deities.

After initiation Shabkar spent several years in retreat, practising the preliminary techniques, the creative and fulfilment stages and Dzokchen—Cutting Through and Immediate Crossing—according to the *Tamphak Yeshe Norbu*,[77] his Lama's chief practice and now his own. After many more years with his Lama, during which time he received all the initiations of his lineage, he entered a further period of rigorous practice. In the middle of the Kokonor Lake, the vast Turquoise Blue Lake sacred to Avalokiteśvara, is an island called Great God Heart of the Lake, Tsonying Mahadeva. Since no boat was permitted to sully the lake, the island could only be reached on foot, crossing the ice that covers the lake for a brief period each year. Yogins would provide themselves with a year's provision and isolate themselves in the perfect solitude on the island at the centre of the lake-mandala. Shabkar remained there three years practising the mahā-, anu- and āti- yogas of the Tamdrin-Phakmo cycle. During his sojourn on this island Shabkar wrote *The Flight of the Garuda*. It was an early work of his genius.

Shabkar was known as an incarnation of Milarepa, Tibet's Great Yogin, and his Lama, Choki Gyelpo Ngaki Wongpo, as an incarnation of Marpa the Translator, the family yogin. Milarepa's talent in

composing and singing mystical songs extempore was shared by Shabkar, and so was his propensity for the anchorite's life. But the yogin from the fringes of the Tibetan ethnic world was also a wanderer, roaming on pilgrimage throughout the Tibetan heartland and beyond. Punctuating his pilgrimage with retreats in caves and hermitages, he visited Amne Machen, Amdo's sacred mountain; he performed the Tsari Rongkhor (circumambulation of the Tsari mountain); he spent a year at Gang Rimpoche, Mt. Kailash. On his pilgrimage to Labchi, to the west of Mt. Everest, it was said of him that wherever he travelled he left the people established in the Dharma, and wherever he stepped he converted "black," or tarnished, worldlings into "white," or refined, practitioners. Thus he gained his sobriquet "Shabkar"(White Foot). During his pilgrimage, between retreats, he would continue his instruction at the feet of Lamas of every school, particularly the Drukpa Kagyu, with which his own heterogenous brand of yogin-monk mix had a strong affinity. However he was also interested in the Kadampas (the school founded by Atīśa and assimilated by the Gelukpas), and Tsongkhapa himself, whose great work, *The Stages of the Path*, received sustained attention from Shabkar.

Shabkar's study and practice bore fruit in his own writing. He had the gift of speed-writing. It was said that he could write a hundred pages daily. If so, he could have spent only a month or so to produce his thirteen volumes of writing, the chief of which concerned his principal practice, the Tamdrin-Phakmo cycle. Other volumes treated the Kadampa School, Bodhisattvahood, the Nyingma tantras, and Mañjuśrī, demonstrating the wide purview of his scholarship. Shabkar's rounded personality is evinced also by his meritorious works: the gift of a solid gold butter lamp to the great monastery of Samye; the gilding of the superstructure of the Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu; the construction of numerous monasteries and temples in his own Amdo homelands. No antisocial, cantankerous hermit, he had the Bodhisattva's ability to transform himself into a receptacle

of offerings that he used for the good of all sentient beings.

Shabkar lived on well into the twentieth century, passing away in 1922 at the age of eighty-one. On the completion of a long discourse to his disciples, his spirit left his body while he still sat upright in lotus posture. So passed the "carefree spirit" of the "little anchorite" who, in many ways, in example and words, did more to feed the faith and support the spiritual needs of the common people than a multitude of tulkus on brocaded thrones. His spirit never returned to inhabit another body, or if it did it was in the obscurity in which the original Shabkar spent much of his "public" life. His lineage, however, proliferated. Tulshik Rimpoche of Thubten Choling in Solu, Nepal, is a contemporary practitioner of his lineage.

This, then, is the Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol who wrote and sang *The Flight of the Garuda.* In his own judgment he was a simple, perspicacious mendicant without a care in the world. The clarity and power of the succinct, simple, expression for which he is justly renowned is evident on every page of his work. *The Flight of the Garuda* also demonstrates the writer's eclectic erudition and the fertile memory that allowed him in his extempore compositions to quote or paraphrase verses of Saraha's *Dohakoṣa,* for instance, and passages from Longchenpa's *Dzodun,* among the works that he lists in his colophon.

The Garuda of the title refers to a mythological bird, the Khading, or Khyung, of ancient Bon legend. It may have been that Khading and Khyung originally represented the powers of light and darkness in the eternal conflict of Manichean Bon myth. The Manichean influence on Bon was derived from countries to the northwest of Tibet. Later, Khyung and Khading were confounded, and the bird came to represent the Bon spirit of fire. It is to be found, for example, in the upper left-hand corner of prayer-flags (snowlion, earth; tiger, air; dragon, water; and horse, space, complete the symbolism of the five elements in the prayer-flag). When the Sanskritic tradition of Buddhism became dominant in Tibet,

both Khading and Khyung were assimilated to the Garuda. In the Vedic mythology of ancient Aryan India, it was Garuda who stole the nectar of immortality from Indra, the king of the gods, in much the same way as the cosmic bird Zu stole the Tablets of Destiny from the gods in the Babylonian myth. In the later Indian context, Garuda became the vehicle of Viṣṇu, the Lord of Preservation and Order in the cosmos, and particularly Lord Kṛṣṇa's vehicle. Also, in the puranas and epics, as a fire-spirit, Garuda features as the implacable enemy of the Nāga water-spirits. In Tibetan Buddhist Tantra, Garuda represents the energy of fire that heals nāga-related diseases, particularly cancer.

In Dzokchen, Garuda is seen to represent the Dzokchen yogin. The nature of the bird is illuminated by the ancient Bon myth that relates how, at the beginning of time, the Khyung manifested spontaneously out of the cosmic egg as a fully mature being. The Garuda can transfer itself instantaneously from one place to another. From the mahāyāna[78] tradition is derived the image of the Garuda's wings beating in unison to demonstrate the unitary nature of duality, particularly the simultaneous arising of skilful means and perfect insight. Then from nature, observing the flight of the Tibetan eagle-vulture, the Dzokchenpa can perceive an analogue of his own effortless path. The bird in flight is a wonder to behold. Gliding for miles using the wind's currents to support its weight, its instinctual mastery of aeronautics is incomparable. The same kind of natural, intuitive faculty that coordinates the bird's flight governs the Dzokchenpa's activity.

The two wings that beat in unison in the Garuda's poetic flight are form and meaning. Unfortunately the abstract, technical content of *The Flight of the Garuda* does not lend itself to versification and poetic expression in English, so that the balance in Shabkar's songs is not reflected in this translation, in which poetic form and rhythm has been sacrificed to clarity of meaning. Often, several words are required to render a single technical term into English,

and it is impossible to maintain a regular metre. Rather than attempt unsatisfactory versification, I have translated these songs into prose, which is a more suitable medium for their metaphysical and technical vocabulary. Still, the Garuda's flight should appear effortless, its wings beating in unison.

The Flight of the Garuda is a collection of Dzokchen songs compiled to teach trekcho meditation. Thus in general the structure of the text shows the evolution of the path. This development is not formulated as an academic treatise on trekcho, since the songs are composed in different styles with different thrusts of meaning. The songs can be categorized as Songs of Introduction (Songs Four to Seven, Ten to Twelve, and Fourteen to Sixteen); Songs of Precept (Songs Three, Eight and Nine, Thirteen and Fourteen, Sixteen to Eighteen and Twenty-one); and Aphoristic Songs (Songs One and Two, Sixteen, Seventeen, Nineteen and Twenty-two). Some songs combine introduction and precept in an aphoristic form (e.g., Song Sixteen), while others may be an introduction to an aspect of Knowledge with clear instruction on meditation technique (Songs Fourteen to Nineteen, and Twenty-two and Twenty-three).

Perhaps the most potent songs are the Songs of Introduction or Initiation. Shabkar Lama indicates the purpose of these songs in the final line of each: "Such is my introduction initiating recognition of...the original nature of mind," or "...our true existential condition," and so on. The Dzokchen vision that these songs are aimed at initiating and strengthening is not merely an intellectual function, but an opening up of a channel for Knowledge to flow in; or, if it is an intellectual function, then it is the intellect participating in the destruction of its own dualizing propensities and other obstacles to the spontaneous awakening of Knowledge. Thus these "introductions" are not philosophical statements but tools inducing the recognition of various aspects of the enlightened mind that is akin to initiation into Knowledge. The inspired nature of the Tibetan

poetry, the meditative frame of mind during which the songs are sung, the clear, direct and succinct style of expression, and not least the potency of the metaphysical exposition and formulae, all conspire to induce Dzokchen vision spontaneously. In Shabkar Lama's colophon he states explicitly that the songs should be sung during the development process of Dzokchen vision.

The first "introductory" song, initiating recognition of the original nature of mind, or our original existential condition,[79] is preceded by the first "preceptual" song giving instruction on experiential discovery of the nature of mind. It is only on the basis of failure to discover any entity which is mind that this verbal initiation into the original face of mind is effective. Our ingrained, conditioned assumption that the brain as a substantial entity is the mind, or its seat, is destroyed by the failure to find anything substantial that can be called mind. "Mind" immediately becomes something enigmatic, mystical, transcendental and magical, and an intellectual void. This void is filled by the songs of introduction, which establish the Dzokchen vision. The cynic's view, that this is an example of religious conditioning with less reality than the preconceptions it replaces, is countered by the assertion that the Dzokchen vision has no intellectual structure and that the labelling of attributes performed by these introductions is not so much a labelling process of substantial objective qualities by the subjective mind as the attachment of verbal symbols to actual experiences of gnostic awareness.

Searching for the nature of mind has pointed awareness in the right direction. Practising the instructions described in the successive songs of precept matures this awareness, and as the state of Knowledge grows its attributes become focused. What is essentially an inconceivable unutterable gnostic condition is seen to be susceptible to analysis by a metaphysical imagination that serves to direct or guide this unitary, gnostic awareness. Thus Shabkar makes a point of stressing that the three modes of being—the three Bodies of Buddha—are in truth a single undifferentiated reality. These

three modes of being relate to the essence, nature and responsiveness of the unitary state. The unitary state of being, like the universe expanding from a point of origin, contracting into that point, and expanding again, *ad infinitum*, is represented by the mandala, and the mandala's centre, diameter and circumference relate to the essence, nature and responsiveness that are the three modes of being. The essential insight is recognition of the original nature of being in its ontological aspect as introduced in Song Six. Shabkar names this the main practice. This insight precedes the introduction to the "structure" of this original nature, which is Buddha and his five modes representing five aspects of primal awareness.

A second series of songs of precept give instruction in meditation upon the form of emptiness, teaching that all phenomena are mind-created. The introductions that follow confirm the insights that arise by applying those precepts. Song Ten introduces the initiatory recognition of all forms, the product of dualizing thought processes, as mind. Song Eleven gives a complete series of introductions initiating recognition of the empty nature of mind, the emptiness of phenomena, the indivisibility of appearances and emptiness, and finally the inevitable result of these previous insights—recognition of natural, spontaneous gnostic liberation. It also defines the Cutting Through phase of Dzokchen practice as a twenty-four-hour-a-day meditation.

Song Twelve is not a song of introduction, but it has the same force. It defines the three modes of being from two different angles: as the dharmakāya and as the rūpakāya, as emptiness and as form, as Knowledge and as the forms of Knowledge that are not separate from it. As Shabkar affirms, this differentiation has the power to initiate recognition of the pure-lands of the three modes of being. The projections of Knowledge, the flow of spontaneously originated appearances pure from the beginning, are the Buddha's Pure-lands since they are identical to the indivisible light and space that is the dharmakāya. In terms of the crystal metaphor that Shabkar employs

in this song, according to the static definition the rūpakāya consists of the crystal's natural glow (saṁbhogakāya) and the medium of whatever appears in that dancing glass (nirmāṇakāya). According to the dynamic definition, the rūpakāya consists of inner radiant light (saṁbhogakāya) and unobstructed manifest diversity (nirmāṇakāya). The chief point in this subtle distinction appears to be that in the latter, dynamic aspect, the nirmāṇakāya is the diversity of form itself, the contents of the vessel of consciousness, rather than its medium, the empty space of the vessel. Thus this distinction is confirming the absolute emptiness of form while focusing upon the form itself—Buddhafields!

Song Fourteen introduces the yogin to recognition of spontaneous release of the six sense-fields by means of precepts instructing him in meditation on the one-taste. Song Fifteen introduces recognition of the identity of quiescence and movement in the state of Knowledge.[80] This paradox is best explained by means of the metaphor Shabkar employs: the quiescence of the ocean bottom is likened to an inactive, thoughtless mind, while the rollers and breakers of the ocean's surface are the active mind. The active and inactive are part and parcel of the same awareness—Knowledge. For this reason it is impossible to recognize a Dzokchenpa by his external display: no action of body, speech and mind can ever be divorced from the ocean of Knowledge. Later Shabkar discusses the folly of identifying a quiescent mind as a realized state. The attainment of quiescence in meditation is an accomplishment of the gods of the formless realm of conditioned existence. This may be useful in controlling the mind while seeking to help sentient beings on the relative plane, and it may be the source of some divine pleasure, but it is not a direct means to the Buddha's enlightenment, which is liberation from all the polarities of existence.

The first part of Song Sixteen is the last song of introduction, and in one sense the climax of these verbal initiations: it is an introduction to recognition of Dzokchen itself. A verse describing the resolution

of various seeming dualities in the Dzokchen domain removes many obstacles of doubt. Then Shabkar assures us that there is a reflexive responsiveness here, implying the redundancy of a manipulative siddhi-ridden mind, as body, speech and mind function spontaneously to fulfil the Bodhisattva Vow. In fact, the compassionate aspect of the realized mind is a special quality of Dzokchen practice.

Song Sixteen ends with a warning in the only verse touching on danger in any of the songs. This danger is the bane of Dzokchen. It explains why Dzokchen precepts are so difficult to obtain. For this reason, a Lama who teaches Dzokchen without first ascertaining the moral proclivities of his students risks producing a lineage of demon-yogins. Shaman magicians may seek Dzokchen instruction with the aim of harnessing demon-energy for their own dark purposes. With love or money, a student may purchase Dzokchen initiation from an inferior Dzokchenpa with the sole intention of turning his knowledge to selfish purposes of power and domination. Even though the Dzokchen yogin maintains his Bodhisattva Vow unbroken and his motivation is unblemished, it appears that negative effects may still result. In the biographies of even great Lamas it is recorded that Dzokchen precepts were withheld from them until the end of their preceptor's life, not out of fear that the disciple may turn black, but that selfless, benevolent bodhisattvic motivation could be blunted. Even Yeshe Tsogyel, Guru Rimpoche's Consort, was no exception and precepts were withheld from her until the end of her life. When Shabkar himself was intent upon obtaining a rainbow body he was warned in a dream by Senge Dongma, the Lion-headed Ḍākinī, that he could certainly obtain it but that his ability to assist others would be vitiated thereby. The longer the student Dzokchenpa spends in developing and refining the skilful means of implementing the Bodhisattva Vow before Dzokchen initiation, the more effective will be the compassionate forms he manifests spontaneously after Dzokchen realization.

How is it that at the threshold of the Buddha's realization the

practitioner can be possessed by the "anti-Buddha"? How is it that at this stage "a demon of intense and infinite evil" can possess the mind and turn the Dzokchenpa into a black magician? There appear to be several factors at work. The resolution of the duality of virtue and vice can cause a shrinking from virtue and the embracing of vice, as Shabkar indicates. Since all acts are empty illusion there is no moral reason to prefer one over the other, and since guilt, sin and karmic retribution are empty illusion they are no cause for alarm. Further, it seems that the deviant yogin's power is derived from a false identification of the Buddha with the most subtle residue of his ego. He is convinced that he is the Buddha, "the one-taste of the dharmakāya."[81] If the yogin is well founded in the karma of virtue, with this warning in mind he avoids the destruction of the supports of a virtuous life even though both virtue and vice are equally the illusory play of the mind.

The importance of a firm foundation in the lower approaches becomes evident at this point. A strong foundation in the Four Noble Truths will obviate the danger, and if the lessons of Śākyamuni's three excursions out of the pleasure-palace into the city of sickness, old age and death were the cause of an original turning around in the seat of consciousness, then bodhicitta need not be diminished or overwhelmed by demonic perversions. It is not only an article of faith but a fact of peak experience that compassionate responsiveness arises coincident with a samādhi of genuine emptiness. But on the approach to Dzokchen initiation this statement must be predicated by prolonged and profound purification practices before Dzokchen precepts are requested, so that there is no hitch when the goal is in sight. This crucial warning ends the part of Song Sixteen that initiates recognition of Dzokchen and it ends the songs of introduction.

The Songs of Precept are straightforward meditation instruction. Shabkar Lama's poetic genius shows itself here, for the content does not naturally lend itself to poetic treatment. The first song of precept is Song Four, which instructs in the exercise of discovering the

nature of mind. "Discovery of the nature of mind" epitomizes the purpose of Dzokchen. In Dzokchen meditation there is nothing but this imperative to find the mind. But in this discursive form the meditation belongs to the internal preliminary stage of Dzokchen. Shabkar Lama provides the answers in the same song as the questions, assuming that we are intellectually familiar with the answers and that experiential revelation of them is all that is necessary. However, a western neophyte will gain important insight into the differences between basic oriental and occidental assumptions about the nature of mind if he forgets the Dzokchen answers until all his own preconceptions have emerged.

Song Eight describes another exercise experientially confirming basic Dzokchen hypotheses about mind. "Mind is like the sky"; "the radiance of mind is like sunlight"; "mindforms are ephemeral and capricious"; "all appearances are like reflections in a mirror"; "there is no distinction between appearances and emptiness"; "everything whatsoever is an illusory magical display of mind." All these statements are self-evident, says Shabkar, and the principal difference between the Dzokchenpa and the anxious, bewildered worldling is that the former has experiential knowledge of these facts, while the latter is unable to recognize them due to the partiality and bias inherent in a mind split by subject/object dichotomy. The instruction in Song Nine guides the yogin through a partly discursive analysis of appearances in order to convince him of the insubstantiality of all sensual stimuli. This is not an objective scientific analysis of phenomena. It is an examination of our actual experience, which, according to Buddhist thought, is all we can know about the universe.[82] To all intents and purposes, from the point of view of human consciousness phenomena are mind-created, and these precepts convince the yogin of this verity.

Song Thirteen describes a wonderful meditation that cuts attachment to emotion and uses passion as the source of Awareness in its five aspects. The mechanics of the technique are clearly described in

this song. The pure nature of transcendental awareness inherent in the various emotions is better described like this:

> [This] set of realizations is based in the reflex intuition that every moment of experience is perfect in its ultimate identity.[83] Sloth is undiscriminating and non-judgmental in vision and non-prejudicial in action; indiscriminate lust is unfocused compassion [love with the infinite universe as a lover]; anger, which burns up discursive thought, is the primal awareness in intrinsic knowledge;[84] coincident with the vanity and pride that bring no fall is a siddha's vision of universal sameness; and as for jealousy, there is no room for its passionate attachments and paranoic thought in the reality continuum of its ultimate sameness.[85]

This meditation is to be performed during formal sessions and in the meditative state at all times. As Shabkar affirms, once the accomplishment has become a habit, once the recognition of the purity in passion has become a conditioned response of mind, reflex intuition takes over. There is no question of transformation of passion here: the term germane to this process is "recognition of what already exists waiting for revelation." Then at the end of this song there occurs the statement that logically emerges from practice of this meditation: "The greater the passion and the greater the intensity of discursive thought, the greater the dharmakāya." In this way samsara itself is the Buddha's throne. This song is also an initiatory introduction into spontaneous release of the five poisons.

Song Fourteen, an initiatory introduction to the spontaneous release of the six sense-fields, contains explicit instruction on a technique to reveal the one-taste of all things. This song scotches any residual impression an outsider may have that the one-taste of emptiness, the fruit of Dzokchen, is a single feeling of innocuous pseudo-equanimity, that the goal is a constant stream of sensory sameness. On the contrary, the vast variety of sense impressions are

heightened, despite, or indeed because of, insight into the one-taste of emptiness. Since empty awareness and the form that is the sense-impression are inseparable, where the yogin is enjoined to "observe the mind" in this song he can but become aware of his detachment and the pure pleasure that accompanies every perception, whether it be pleasure or pain, happiness or sadness. No word in English is adequate to translate the feeling-tone of the one-taste. However, the "pure pleasure" of pain is not a sado-masochistic ecstacy; perhaps the feeling-tone of detached enjoyment best conveys the nature of this pleasure.

Songs Sixteen, Seventeen and Eighteen treat the essence of Dzokchen meditation. Sixteen begins with an initiatory introduction to Dzokchen itself, and each verse is a complete revelation. "'Buddha' is the one taste of the dharmakāya"; "the compassionate responsiveness that arises coincident with thought-free samadhi is the special characteristic of Dzokchen vision"; and then "amorality is a demonic perversion." The latter part of this most significant Song Sixteen includes vital advice on the treatment of doubt and equivocation on the path. Shabkar mentions the most virulent and destructive doubt, namely the thought that meditation is redundant because no relative cause can effect the ultimate, acausal, spontaneous Dzokchen goal. His answer to doubt is the True Lama's grace. It is beyond the power of ordinary words to explain or describe to a faithless outsider the nature of the Lama's blessing, and it is totally unnecessary to convince a yogin of the power of his Lama's mind. Pray, relax and remain aware is Shabkar's formula, and he suggests that profound affirmation and renewed conviction will inevitably result. He implies, further, that peak or initiatory experience implanting the Dzokchen vision can be attained through the Lama's blessing. The dynamic of this phenomenon is described in the *Garland of Vision* (pp.188-9), and the point to remember here is that it is the all-pervasive Buddha-Lama who is the source of blessings, not a human entity perceived as a separate, superior external Being. The yogin's attitude of supplication and his focus upon the goal as embodied in the Lama assist this process.

THE FLIGHT OF THE GARUDA

Song Seventeen is another treasury of precepts. It begins with the ineluctable injunction to leave home, family, friends and native country. At the beginning so much can be accomplished in the mind by a physical movement away from the objects of the mind's attachment. The remainder of this long song provides detailed instruction upon Dzokchen vision, meditation and action. It describes the meditation of non-meditation and nothing can be said here to clarify Shabkar's aphorisms on this topic, although volumes have been written on the topic of each verse.

Song Eighteen provides instruction on the methods of removing obstacles on the path. Since at no time are thoughts to be suppressed or neutralized but rather viewed as allies in meditation, if they arise as obstacles a fault in vision has been revealed. Correct vision is accompanied by the relaxed recognition of the nature of obstructing thought, which Shabkar here defines as "the naturally-accomplished Great Perfection." This leads into instruction on "non-action." "Non-action" cannot easily be defined, but one can say that it is accompanied by a sense of perfect balance and poise, even if the non-action is an extreme of action. Perhaps this is the place to quote Shabkar on intellectual analysis: "It is certain that the intellectual with an analytical view of reality has no connection with the Dzokchen Nyingthik."

Song Twenty-one is another song of explicit meditation precepts. It begins with more instruction in Dzokchen meditation and continues with various techniques for Cutting Through designed for practitioners of lesser capacity. Yogins with "lesser capacity" are those who have not attained the essential initiation from the Lama or who have not sustained the initiatory state with spontaneous, effortless ease, practising the foregoing precepts reflexively. The techniques described here are but a few from the vast store of Dzokchen prescription. These are methods that do

not require aeons of practice but which immediately cut through the dualities of mind and the propensities that block recognition of intrinsic knowledge. They are all simple but highly efficacious techniques, with the exception of the last one, which requires preparation, detailed visualization and special conditions for its performance. It is a simple version of the technique called "Severance" (*chod*). The final exercise, involving simulated lunacy, is one of the standard, internal, extraordinary preliminary Dzokchen practices. Such a technique has appeared in various forms in the synthetic new-age "spiritual development" cults that have a "tantric" flavour, as well as in popular humanistic psychology. The value of such an exercise is self-evident, but it must be performed within a supportive context, such as that of the Lama's precepts, or mental damage can ensue.

Songs of the third type are Aphoristic Songs, those consisting of aphorisms. The Sanskrit *sloka*, a two-lined metrical verse, is an ideal vehicle of expression for scripture, epic poetry and so forth. In Tibetan scripture a four-line verse serves the same aphoristic purpose—a literary device to assist the memory. Yogins going into retreat learn by heart such texts of precept as *The Flight of the Garuda* so that the verse required at any moment is ready on the tip of the tongue. Thus some of the songs of precept are couched in aphoristic verse, and some songs consist entirely of this form—Songs One and Two, for example. Each verse is complete in itself and there need be no relationship in content between one verse and the next. The mahāsiddha's treasuries of *dohas* are very similar to Songs One and Two, a similarity strengthened by sameness in meaning and even in vocabulary and syntax. No doubt Shabkar Lama was familiar with either the mahāsiddhas' songs themselves or some potted Tibetan plagiarism.

In the context of the path of the supreme Inner Tantra, the part of *The Flight of the Garuda* discussed and translated here belongs to

the level called Cutting Through, which is the penultimate phase of atiyoga when Dzokchen is divided into the two levels of Cutting Through (trekcho) and Immediate Crossing (*togal*). There is a second part to *The Flight of the Garuda* that treats Immediate Crossing in a similar manner. Immediate Crossing is a more dangerous vehicle than Cutting Through and its precepts are never divulged except within the framework of a Lama-disciple relationship when they are about to be practised. However, it is permissible to generalize about this most secret vehicle insofar as it sheds light on the nature of Cutting Through. These two phases of Dzokchen practice are both complementary and serial in relationship. The "primal purity" that qualifies Cutting Through and the "spontaneous origination" that qualifies Immediate Crossing are different sides of the same Dzokchen coin and at the same time primal purity is the foundation of spontaneous origination of events out of, and as the nature of, primal purity. Thus Cutting Through is the technique of dissolving all appearances, all emotion and thought into their original nature of primal purity. Vision, meditation and action work together to produce spontaneously originated Knowledge of all things as perfect and complete, as space and light. Experience becomes a continuum of reality where reality is space and transparent rainbow-coloured light.

The Song of the Vision of Cutting Through to the Clear Light of the Great Perfection with the Capacity to Traverse Quickly the Paths and Stages

The Flight of the Garuda[86]

NAMOGURUJO:

Homage and reverence to Lama Choki Gyelpo[87]
Whose seven-horsed mandala of all-illuminating wisdom and love
Radiates all-embracing beams of boundless compassion
Instantaneously enlightening beings of the three realms.

Homage and reverence to Ngakchang Dorje:
From clouds of loving kindness and compassion piled high
In the vast expanse of his radiant, empty dharmakāya,
A downpour of dharma descends upon the earth,
Upon his fortunate disciple vessels.

The winds of diligence blowing into the unfurled sails of high aspiration,
The ship of vision carries all beings drowning in the ocean of existence
To the Island of Jewels, the Buddha's trikāya:
Homage to the captain of that ship, Jamyang Gyatso!

The sun of wisdom and love of these my three Lamas,
Radiating warming rays of potent grace,
Struck the white lotus of this lucky vagrant,
And the bud of Knowledge fully opening
A thousand petals of mystical experience and insight were exposed.

Piled high on the pistils of intelligence
Lies nectar that liberates by taste,
The ambrosial nectar of these songs of vision:
This I offer to my lucky disciples, the swarm of bees,
To drink in devotion to their hearts' content.

Song One: The Miraculous Nature of Being[88]

EHMAHO! This carefree and free-speaking vagrant with the deep intelligence now sings *The Flight of the Garuda,* a song of vision, facilitating fast ascent of all the stages and paths.[89] Listen attentively, my beloved sons and daughters!

Like the roar of the dragon, the great name of Buddha resounds throughout the universe, in samsara and nirvana. Constantly vibrating in the minds of the six types of sentient beings, how wonderful that this resonance is not silent a moment!

They may be ignorant of the Buddha's existence within, but how amazing that fools search for him outside! Clearly visible like sunshine, bright and radiant, how surprising that so few can see him!

The Mind, the Buddha himself, having neither mother nor father, how wonderful it is that he knows neither birth nor dying! Suffering all our multifarious feelings, how marvelous that he is unaffected for better or worse!

The original face of the mind, unborn and primally pure—how wonderful its authenticity and natural perfection! Intrinsic knowledge itself, our naturally liberated nature—how marvelous it is that no matter what occurs it is released by letting it be!

SONG TWO: THE FUNDAMENTAL MEDITATION

EHMAHO! Noble, beloved sons and daughters, listen without distraction! All the Victorious Buddhas of the past, present and future have taught eighty-four thousand books of scripture, teaching as boundless as space itself, but all to one end: how to realize the nature of mind. The Buddhas taught nothing more than this.

If the principal root of a tall tree is severed, its ten thousand branches and leaves will wither and die all together; likewise, when the single root of the mind is cut, the leaves of samsara, such as dualistic clinging, perish.

The empty house that has stood in darkness for millennia is illuminated instantly by a single lamp; likewise, an instant's realization of the mind's clear light eradicates negative propensities and mental obscurations inculcated over countless aeons.

The brilliance and clarity of sunlight cannot be dimmed by aeons of darkness; likewise, the radiance of the mind's essential nature cannot be obscured by aeons of delusion.

Indeterminate is the colour and shape of the sky, and its nature is unaffected by black or white clouds; likewise, the colour and shape of mind's nature is indeterminate, and it cannot be tainted by black or white conduct, by virtue or vice.

Milk is the basis of butter, but the butter will not separate until the milk is churned; likewise, human nature is the ground of Buddhahood, but without existential realization sentient beings cannot awaken.

Through gnostic experience of the nature of reality, through practice of these precepts, all beings can gain freedom; regardless of the acuity of his faculties even a cowherd attains liberation if his existential experience is nondual realization.

When you realize the clear light of mind's nature, the pundit's words of wisdom are redundant. How relevant is another's description of the taste of treacle when your mouth is full of it?

Even the pundit is deluded if he has no existential realization. He may be skilled in comprehensive exposition of the nine approaches to Buddhahood, but he is as far distant from Buddhahood as the earth is from the sky if he knows of it only from secondhand accounts.

You may keep your strict moral discipline for an aeon and patiently practise meditation for an eternity, but if you have yet to realize the clear light of the mind's immaculate nature you will not extricate yourself from the three realms of samsara. Diligently examine the nature of your mind!

SONG THREE: INSTRUCTION IN THE ESSENTIAL MEDITATION

EHMAHO! Now listen further, all my best beloved sons and daughters! No matter what system of mind-training you practise, unless you realize the nature of your mind, severing its root, you miss the point of Dzokchen.

The errant aspirant blind to this imperative is like the archer who places his target to the front only to shoot off his arrow in another direction. He is like the householder who searches outside for a thief who is still in the house; like the exorcist who sets his spirit-trap at the west door when the demon lives to the east; like the poor man who begs, blind to his hearth-stone of gold.

Therefore, my beloved children, you who wish to resolve life's frustrations and anxieties by the direct method of discovering the nature of mind, examine your minds in the following way:

What we call "mind" is an insistent chatterer, hopping, skipping and jumping about. Try to catch it and it slips away, changing shape or vanishing; attempt to focus it and it will not be still, proliferating and scattering; try to pin it with a label and it resolves into unutterable emptiness. But it is this same mind that experiences the gamut of human feeling, and this is the mind that must be scrutinized.

First, what is the origin of this mind? Is it a function of external phenomena—mountains, rocks, water, trees and celestial breezes—or is it independent of them? Asking yourself where the mind comes from, investigate this possibility thoroughly.

Alternatively, consider whether or not the mind originates from the reproductive fluids of our parents. If so, enquire into the process by which it emerges. Continue this enquiry until it is exhausted and you admit the mind has no origin.

Then secondly, answer the question "Where is the mind now?" Is it in the upper or lower part of your body, in your sense organs, in your lungs or your heart?[90] If it lodges in your heart, in what part of the heart? What is its colour and shape? Thoroughly investigate the present location of the mind and its characteristics until you are certain that they are not to be found.

Finally, examine the movement of the mind. When it moves, does it pass through the organs of the senses? In its momentary embrace of external objects, is there physical contact? Is it only a mental function, or are both body and mind involved together? Investigate the process of perception.

Further, when a thought arises with its attendant emotion, firstly, investigate its source. Secondly, find its present location, its colour and shape and any other attributes. Look long and hard for the answers to these questions. Lastly, when thought has subsided into itself and vanished, where has it gone? Examine your mind closely for the answers.

At the time of death, what occurs to the mind? How does it leave the body? Where does it exit? Consider these questions and all their ramifications in detail.

Persevere in your careful enquiry, examining the mind until you reach a positive conclusion that it is empty, pure and utterly inexpressible, that it is a non-entity and free of birth and death, coming and going.

The arid assertions and metaphors of others—statements such as "Mind is emptiness!"—are worse than useless. Until you know the answer yourself such statements tend to bring doubt and hesitation to the mind. It is like a dogmatic assertion that tigers do in fact live in a country where it is generally supposed that tigers are extinct. It leaves doubt and uncertainty on the subject. After attentively examining your mind and having established its nature, it is as if you have explored the valleys and hills where the tigers are said to exist and, having seen for yourself whether tigers live there, are fully informed. Thereafter, if the question of tigers' existence in that place arises, you will have no doubt as to the truth of the matter.

SONG FOUR: INITIATION INTO THE NATURE OF MIND

EHMAHO! Again, my beloved sons and daughters, gather round and listen! During the analysis and examination of your minds in the manner described above, when you failed to find a "mind" that you could point to and say "This is it!" and when you failed to

find so much as an atom that you could call concrete, then your failure was supreme success.

Firstly, "mind" has no origin; since it is originally emptiness its essence is insubstantial. Secondly, it has no location, no colour and no shape. Finally, it does not move: without moving, it disappears without a trace; its activity is empty activity, its emptiness empty appearances.

Mind's nature[91] is not created by a cause in the first place, and it is not destroyed by an agent or condition at the end. It is a constant quantity: nothing can be added to or taken from it, it is incapable of increase or decrease, and it cannot be filled or emptied.

Since mind's nature is all-pervasive, the ground of both samsara and nirvana, it is without bias or partiality. No form demonstrates its actuality more clearly than another, and it manifests all and everything equally without obstruction.

Mind cannot be established or defined as anything at all specific, since it goes beyond the limitations of existence and non-existence. Without coming and going it is without birth and death, without clarity and obscuration.

The nature of mind in its purity is like a stainless crystal ball: its essence is emptiness, its nature is clarity, and its responsiveness is a continuum.

In no way whatever is the nature of mind affected by samsara's negativity. From the first it is Buddha. Trust in this!

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of the original nature of mind, the ground of our being, our true existential condition.[92]

SONG FIVE: ADMISSION OF DELUSION

EHMAHO! Again, my beloved heart-sons, listen! Hear how Dharmakāya Kuntu Zangpo is free without need for so much as an instant of meditation, and how the six types of beings wander in samsara without having performed even the slightest negative or vicious act.

In the beginning, before anything was, nameless samsara and nirvana were pure potential in the original ground of being. This is how Knowledge arose from the ground at that time: in the same way that the natural light of a crystal shines out when a sunbeam strikes it, when the primal awareness of Knowledge was vitalized by life-force, the seal of the Vase of Eternal Youth was broken and spontaneously originated clear light shone in the sky like the light of the rising sun, as pure-lands of pure-being and primal awareness.[93]

Then Dharmakāya Kuntu Zangpo understood this to be his spontaneous manifestation, and instantaneously the outer light of pure-being and primal awareness dissolved into the inner clear light. In the original ground of being, pure from the beginning, he attained Buddhahood.

We unenlightened beings, however, did not understand that the nature of spontaneously originated appearances was our own natural radiance, and unmindful perception and bewilderment were the result. This is called "the ignorance that accompanies every perception."

Also at that time the clear light and the appearances arisen out of the ground of clear light were perceived as two. This is called "conceptual

ignorance." It was at this juncture that we fell into the trap of ignorant dualism.

Thereafter, as the potentialities of our experience proliferated with the gradual widening of the scope of our activity, the entire gamut of samsaric action emerged. Then the three emotional poisons appeared together with the five poisons that evolved from them, the eighty-four thousand forms of passion developing from the five poisons, and so on. Since then, until this very moment, we have endured the pleasure and pain of the wheel's constant revolutions. We spin endlessly in this samsaric existence as if tied to a waterwheel.

If you need elaboration of this topic, consult Kunkhyen Longchenpa's *Treasury of the Supreme Approach* and the *Dense Cloud of Profound Significance*, among others.[94]

Now, although your Lama's profound personal instruction has made you aware of the self-deception and delusion harboured in the dark cave of your mind, you have also recognized your mind as Buddha. You have encountered the original face of the Original Lord, the Ādibuddha, and you know that you possess the same potential as Kuntu Zangpo. My spiritual children, contemplate this joy from the bottom of your hearts!

Such is my introduction initiating certain recognition of delusion.

SONG SIX: INITIATION INTO OUR TRUE EXISTENTIAL CONDITION

EHMAHO! Again, beloved children of my heart, listen! "Mind," this universal concept, this most significant of words, being no single entity, manifests as the gamut of pleasure and pain in samsara and nirvana. There are as many beliefs about it as there are approaches

to Buddhahood. It has innumerable synonyms.

In the vernacular it is "I"; some Hindus call it the "Self"; the Disciples say "self-less individual"; the followers of Mind-only call it simply "mind"; some call it "perfect insight"; some call it "Buddha-nature"; some call it the "Magnificent Stance" (Mahāmudrā); some call it the "Middle Way"; some call it the "Cosmic Seed"; some call it the "reality-continuum"; some call it the "universal ground"; some call it "ordinary consciousness."[95] Since the synonyms of "mind," the labels we apply to it, are countless, know it for what it really is. Know it experientially as the here and now. Compose yourself in the natural state of your mind's nature.

When at rest the mind is ordinary perception, naked and unadorned; when you gaze directly at it there is nothing to see but light; as Knowledge,[96] it is brilliance and the relaxed vigilance of the awakened state; as nothing specific whatsoever, it is a secret fullness; it is the ultimacy of nondual radiance and emptiness.

It is not eternal, for nothing whatsoever about it has been proved to exist. It is not a void, for there is brilliance and wakefulness. It is not unity, for multiplicity is self-evident in perception. It is not multiplicity, for we know the one taste of unity. It is not an external function, for Knowledge is intrinsic to immediate reality.

In the immediate here and now we see the face of the Original Lord abiding in the heart centre. Identify yourself with him, my spiritual sons. Whoever denies him, wanting more from somewhere else, is like the man who has found his elephant but continues to follow its tracks. He may comb the three dimensions of the microcosmic world systems for an eternity, but he will not find so much as the name of Buddha other than the one in his heart.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of our true existential condition, which is the principal realization in Cutting Through to the Great Perfection.[97]

SONG SEVEN: ASSERTION OF INTRINSIC BUDDHAHOOD

EHMAHO! Once more listen attentively, my noble sons and daughters. The three modes of Buddha's being—essence, nature and responsiveness—and the five modes of being, as well as the five aspects of primal awareness are all completed and perfected in the naturally luminous intrinsic knowledge of the here and now.

The essence of Knowledge, indefinable by any term such as colour, shape or other attribute, is the dharmakāya; the inherent radiance of emptiness is the light of the saṁbhogakāya; and the unimpeded medium in which all things manifest is the nirmāṇakāya.

The three modes are explained figuratively like this: the dharmakāya is a crystal mirror; the saṁbhogakāya is its nature—brilliant clarity; and the nirmāṇakāya is the unobstructed medium in which the reflection appears.

From the first, people's minds have existed as these three modes of being. If they are able to recognize this spontaneously, it is unnecessary for them to practise even so much as a moment of formal meditation—the awakening to Buddhahood is instantaneous.

In this introduction to the three modes they are defined separately. In truth, my heart-children, do not fall into the error of believing them to be separate, belonging to different continuums.

From the beginning, the three modes of being are empty and utterly pure. Understanding them as a single essence that is the union of

radiance and emptiness, conduct yourself in a state of detachment.

The triad of essence, nature and responsiveness, again, corresponds to dharmakāya, saṁbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya. Understanding these three as the mystic union of emptiness and radiance, conduct yourself in a state of detachment.

Further, since the primal awareness of self-existing Knowledge manifests everything whatsoever, this awareness is the pure-being[98] of the Creator, Vairocana; since it is unchanging and unchangeable, it is the pure-being of Immutable Diamond, Akṣobhya-vajra; since it is without centre or circumference, it is the pure-being of Boundless Light-form, Amitābha; since it is also the gem that is the source of supreme realization and relative powers, it is the pure-being of the Fountain of Jewels, Ratnasambhava; since it accomplishes all aspiration, it is the pure-being of the Fulfiller of All Ambition, Amoghasiddhi. These deities are nothing but the creative power of Knowledge.[99]

The primal awareness of Knowledge is mirror-like awareness because of the manifest clarity of its unobstructed essence. It is awareness of sameness because it is all-pervasive. It is discriminating awareness because the entire gamut of diverse appearances is manifest from its creativity. It is the awareness that accomplishes all actions because it fulfils all our ambition. It is awareness of the reality-continuum, the dharmadhātu, because the single essence of all these aspects of awareness is primal purity. Not so much as an atom exists apart from these, which are the creativity of intrinsic knowledge.

When a pointed finger introduces you directly and immediately to the three modes—essence, nature and responsiveness—and the Five Buddhas and the five aspects of awareness, all together, then what is experienced is brilliant, awakened Knowledge unaffected

by circumstance and uninfluenced by clinging thought; it is cognition of the here and now, unstructured and unaffected.

All the Buddhas of the three aspects of time arise from this Knowledge. Constantly identify yourselves with it, beloved sons and daughters, because this is the spirituality of all the Buddhas of the three aspects of time.[100]

Knowledge is the unstructured, natural radiance of your own mind, so how can you say that you cannot see the Buddha? There is nothing at all to meditate upon in it, so how can you complain that meditation does not arise? It is manifest Knowledge, your own mind, so how can you say that you cannot find it? It is a stream of unceasing radiant wakefulness, the face of your mind, so how can you say that you cannot see it? There is not so much as a moment of work to be done to attain it, so how can you say that your effort is unavailing? Centred and dispersed states are two sides of the same coin, so how can you say that your mind is never centred? Intrinsic knowledge is the spontaneously originated three modes of being, which is achieved without striving, so how can you say that your practice fails to accomplish it? It is enough to leave the mind in a state of non-action, so how can you say that you are incapable of attaining it? Your thoughts are released at the moment of their inception, so how can you say that the antidotes were ineffective? It is cognition of the here and now, so how can you say you do not perceive it?

SONG EIGHT: THE METHOD OF ATTAINING CONVICTION

EHMAHO! Once again, beloved sons and daughters, listen with devotion! "Mind in its insubstantiality is like the sky." Is this true or false, my children? Confirm it by relaxing completely and looking directly at the mind, gazing with your entire mind, free of all tension.

"The emptiness of the mind is not just a blank nothingness, for without doubt it is the primal awareness of intrinsic knowledge, radiant from the first. Self-existent, natural radiance is like sunlight." Is this indeed true? To confirm it, relax completely, looking directly at the nature of your mind.

"There is no doubt that it is impossible to objectify or grasp thought or the movement of memory. This capricious, changeable movement is like the cosmic wind!" Is this indeed so? To confirm it, relax completely, looking directly at the nature of your mind.

"Without doubt all appearances whatsoever are our own manifestation. All phenomena, whatsoever manifests, is like reflection in a mirror." Is this indeed so? To confirm it, relax completely, looking directly at the nature of your mind.

No experience is possible anywhere but in the mind, so there is nothing to see other than that seen at the moment of vision. No experience is possible anywhere but in the mind, so there is nothing to meditate upon other than mind. No experience is possible anywhere but in the mind, so there is nothing to do other than what is done in the mind. No experience is possible anywhere but in the mind, so there is no samaya to be sustained outside the mind. No experience is possible anywhere but in the mind, so there is no goal to be reached that is not in the mind.

Look, look, and look again. Look at your own mind!

Project your attention into external fields of space, and, attentively watching the nature of your mind, see if it moves. When you are convinced by observation that the mind does not move, retract your attention and concentrate upon the mind within, and look carefully

for the projector of diffused thought. When you have decided that there is no entity responsible for thought patterns, look carefully for the colour and shape of the mind. When you arrive at the emptiness that has no colour or shape, look for a centre or circumference. Certain that middle and margin are the same, search for an inside and an outside. Finding no distinction between inside and outside, you arrive at Knowledge, which is as vast as the sky.

"By virtue of its all-penetrating freedom this Knowledge that has no centre or circumference, no inside or outside, is innocent of all partiality and knows no blocks or barriers. This all-penetrating intrinsic knowledge is a vast expanse of space. All experience of samsara and nirvana arises in it like rainbows in the sky. In all its diverse manifestation it is but a play of mind."

You need only look out from the motionless space of intrinsic knowledge at all experience, illusory like the reflection of the moon in water, to know the impossibility of dividing appearances from emptiness.

"In a state of Knowledge there is no separation of samsara and nirvana." Look out from the motionless space of intrinsic knowledge at all experience, illusory like the reflection in a mirror, and no matter what manifests it can never be tasted, its existence can never be proved. In this dimension samsara and nirvana do not exist and everything is the dharmakāya.

All beings wandering in the three realms of samsara remain trapped in dualism until they realize that within their own perception resides the primal awareness that is the ultimate identity of all experience of samsara and nirvana. Due to the power of the delusive subject/object dichotomy, they hold samsara and nirvana to be different states of

mind. They remain bound because, where in truth there is nonduality, they see a duality.

In reality no distinction between samsara and nirvana can exist in anybody's mind. However, when the worldly fool rejects some things and indulges in others, avoiding the "bad" and cultivating the "good," despising one while loving another, then due to partiality, prejudice and bias, aimlessly he wanders through successive lives.

Rather than attain the spontaneously accomplished three modes of intrinsic knowledge without striving, thick-headed aspirants explore the techniques and stages of many time-consuming methods of "self-improvement," leaving them no time to reach the seat of the Buddha.

"Emphatically, all phenomenal appearances whatsoever are one's own vision."[101] Look out from the state of motionless intrinsic knowledge and all light-form and animate existence is like reflection. Appearances are empty, sound is empty and indeed one's own nature is originally empty.

Similarly, turn your attention inwards to the mind that is the viewer, and your thought processes, naturally subsiding, are empty like the sky, unstructured, free of conceptual elaboration, utterly indeterminable, beyond description, concept and expression of any kind.

All events whatsoever are an illusory magical display of mind and all the magical display of mind is baseless and empty. When you have realized that all events are your own mind, all visual appearances become the empty dharmakāya.

Appearances are not binding. It is through attachment to them that beings are fettered. Sever all delusive attachments, children of my heart!

SONG NINE: MIST, DREAM AND OPTICAL ILLUSION

EHMAHO! Best beloved, fearless sons and daughters, without applying the spur, the horse will not gallop; without thorough churning, the butter will not separate; without detailed explanation you will not be convinced of my meaning. So while I sing my long but lyrical songs, listen in comfort, relaxed, without drooping ears!

Until you perceive all appearances as mind you will never realize the meaning of emptiness. To facilitate this understanding, you favoured children must apply yourselves fully to a diligent analysis and thorough search. Firstly, where do appearances come from? Secondly, where are they now? Lastly, where do they go?

During your examination you will see that just as mist arises out of the sky and dissolves back into the sky, appearances are the magical display of your mind, arising in the mind and vanishing back into it.

Take as an example the shimmering effect seen by a man with an impaired sense of vision when he gazes ahead. Although the shimmering appears to exist in front of his eyes, nothing is there—it is an optical illusion.

In the same way, when mental functions are impaired by negative propensities that cause clinging to apparently external objects as discrete and substantial entities, then visual and auditory phenomena appear to exist where not so much as an atom can be proved to have ultimate reality. Everything is a figment of the mind.

All these figments of mind are baseless and empty. They are nonexistent light-forms, apparition and magical illusion, like the reflection of the moon in water. Compose yourself in the reality of

inseparable appearance and emptiness!

Now, in our sleep we may dream of our native country, our parental home, and our relatives or friends, as if they were actually present, and an appropriate strong feeling may arise. Although our family and friends are not actually present and we have not stirred an inch from our beds, we may experience a face-to-face encounter with them of the same vivid intensity as in the waking state.

Each and every sensual experience of our lives is an experience similar to last night's dream. Just as we attach labels to dream entities, objectifying and clinging to them as substantial entities, so appearances are modified and apprehended by mind in the waking state. In the same way that dreams have no substance, so the figments of the mind, all appearances whatsoever, are also empty.

SONG TEN: THE MIND-CREATED UNIVERSE

EHMAHO! Only children of my heart, most well-beloved! All appearances are indeterminate and equivocal, so much so that what some can see, others cannot.

Further, regarding the sentient beings of this world, some conceive of the world as earth, some conceive of the world as fire; some conceive of the world as wealth and some conceive of the world as suffering.

Some sentient beings conceive of water as water, some conceive of water as fire, some conceive of water as nectar; some conceive of water as their home, while others conceive of water as earth.

Some sentient beings conceive of fire as fire, some conceive of fire as wealth; some conceive of fire as their home, while others conceive of fire as food.

Some sentient beings conceive of space as space, some conceive of space as their home, while others conceive of space as earth.

Thus, insofar as appearances are equivocal, they appear as they do through the power of the karmic proclivities of the perceiver. The four elements conceived as the four elements are human perceptions.

Other beings conceive of the earth as the fires of hell, as the farmers' wealth, or as the misery of the racially oppressed.

Likewise, the fire-gods conceive of fire as enjoyment, hungry-ghosts with bodies of fire conceive of it as their home and fire-flies conceive of it as food.

Likewise, regarding water, denizens of hell conceive of it as fire, hungry ghosts see it as pus and blood, elephants conceive of it as earth, the gods know it to be nectar, shape-shifting gods[102] conceive of it as jewels and a shower of flowers, and nāgas conceive of it as their home.

Finally, regarding space, all the gods conceive of space as earth, since they are made of space.

Furthermore, all phenomenal appearances manifest in whatever manner they have thus been perceptually defined.

When Devaputra asked Śākyamuni, "Who made Mt. Meru, the sun and the moon?," the Buddha himself said with his own lips:

"In answer to that, surely no creator exists other than the karmic potentialities and habitual patterns and conditioning of our thought processes. These define and label appearances, reifying and objectifying them, forming them accordingly. All things are created by our own minds."

Again, Devaputra asked the Buddha, "Our habitual thought patterns and conditioning may inform the nature of appearances, but from whence comes the solidity and density of Mt. Meru, the sun, the moon and so on?" And the Buddha replied:

"In Benares there once lived an old woman who visualized herself as a tiger and transformed her human body into the body of a tiger, and the people of Benares, having set eyes upon her, fled, and the city was deserted. If in a very short time an old woman can effect such a transformation by visualization, is it not indeed probable that appearances have been created in the same way, when the mind has been conditioned by karmic propensities instilled from beginningless time?"

Thus all things are created by mind.

Further, Hindu sadhus are wont to visualize themselves in a solitary place in order to prevent distraction from the mundane hustle and bustle and diversions round about them, and after they have achieved a tangible solitude to live in even other people can appreciate it.

One Hindu yogin is alleged to have visualized a rock in the sky, and after it became as stone it impeded the human body.[103]

Therefore, since all appearances are modified by conceptualization, they are the mind's self-manifest display, and all such manifestation is in reality empty.

Further, denizens of the short-lived hells conceive of their bodies as doors, pillars, ovens and ropes, and so on, and suffer the pain of it. In whatever way appearances are conceived in the mind, inevitably in that form they manifest.

All the pleasure and pain of all sentient beings of the six realms is created only by their own minds. On account of this, while you remain absorbed in equanimity, strive for conviction that all things are your own mind's illusory magical display, insubstantial appearances with an empty essence.

Further, it is said in the scriptures that the three dimensions of microcosmic world systems of suffering beings exist in a single speck of pollen on a pistil of the lotus that Saint Mountain Lake, Muni Himavat-sara, holds in his hand.

The scriptures also assert that when the yogin adept on the path of Immediate Crossing[104] has fully potentiated his vision of reality as Knowledge, he sees boundless Buddhafields, and also boundless fields of residence of sentient beings of the six types, in each and every pore of his body. Into each of the six realms he projects emanations to transform the different beings, and the ultimate purpose of all those beings is served as in a dream.

In such ways all experience of samsara and nirvana is the natural and spontaneous manifestation of one's mind, and the ground of this spontaneous display is emptiness. You must cultivate and sustain conviction in the dimension of emptiness and radiance, remaining free of all attachment to it.

Furthermore, it is said that in a single speck of dust there are as many Buddhafields of infinite dimension, and also innumerable realms of sentient beings of the six types, as there are motes of dust on the earth. The Victorious Buddhas have said that none of these Buddhafields and realms of sentient beings intermingle, affect each other, or produce any ill omen.

And again, people say that in the stomach of every insect there is an

infinite number of hives of microscopic insects. People also believe that in the reaches of space there are an infinite number of cities constructed upside down, and, likewise, innumerable other cities built on their side or right side up. If you question who made these cities in this way, the answer given by the Victorious Buddhas is that they were all conceived in the minds of the sentient beings who perceived them.

You must understand that the nature of mind, from the beginning, is like space, and that all experience is also, necessarily, like space. All relative visual and auditory experience is only the natural and spontaneous manifestation of mind in itself.

Although, indeed, there are changes in the mindstream at death, it is the mind's projections that change—there is no external change.

Since all experience is the manifestation of mind, all manifest appearances are baseless and empty. Sustain the experience of the state of Knowledge where there is no duality between radiance and emptiness, where there is luminous appearance without substance, like the reflection of the moon in water.

All visual appearances, everything that you see, are the spontaneous manifestation of mind. The chalice, the inert phenomena of the world that form a receptacle, is mind; the elixir, the animate existence of the six types of sentient beings that inhabit the world, is also mind; the blissful phenomena of gods and men of the upper realms are mind; the painful phenomena of the three lower realms are mind; the loss of awareness and the passion that manifests as the five poisons are mind; the noumena of Knowledge and primal awareness, self-existent and spontaneously arisen, are mind; the manifestations of negative thought processes created by cyclical mental habit patterns that potentiate transmigratory tendencies are mind; the

manifestation of positive thought patterns, Buddhafields, are mind; the phenomena of obstacles erected by hostile forces, spirits and demons are mind; fully manifest divinity and spiritual powers are mind; the manifest diversity of discursive thought is mind; the phenomenon of one-pointed thoughtless trance is mind; the phenomena of apparent concrete entities with colour and shape and other attributes are mind; that which is indeterminate and without specific characteristics is mind; phenomena in which there is no duality of unity and multiplicity are mind; phenomena that cannot be established in any way as either existent or non-existent are mind.

There is no noumenal or phenomenal manifestation whatsoever that is not mind. The mind is like an artist. The body is created by mind, as are all the many worlds existing in the three dimensions of microcosmic world systems: all of them are also drawn by the mind. All beings possessing this puerile mind are seduced and inveigled by the pictures drawn by their thought processes.

Thus it is of crucial importance to cultivate absolute conviction that all things are the illusory, magical display of mind.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of mental projections, the concepts of dualistic thought processes,[105] as mind.

SONG ELEVEN: THE NATURAL STATE OF GNOSTIC FREEDOM

EHMAHO! Listen further, noble, beloved sons and daughters of my heart! The Buddha taught that the creator of all these appearances mentioned above, mind in itself, has no knowable essence and neither colour nor shape nor any other characteristic. From the beginning empty and intangible like the sky, the nature of mind is unquestionably empty and baseless.

However, although we may use the sky as a metaphor indicating the nature of mind, it is only pointing at mind's emptiness. Mind is also cognitive, its emptiness manifesting everything: the sky is non-cognitive, an empty, blank nothingness. The sky, therefore, does not illustrate the nature of mind.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of the nature of mind as empty.

The spontaneous efflorescence of the empty radiance of mind's nature manifests the infinite diversity of all and everything. Whatever arises seems like the reflection in a mirror, but there is no duality of viewer and vision—they are one in the space of emptiness.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of emptiness as appearances.

From the very beginning appearances and emptiness are indivisible: because the mind is empty, appearances are unimpeded, and ungraspable phenomena arise in the dimension of emptiness as variegated radiance. Appearances, on the other hand, do not obstruct or fill emptiness: although they are manifest, their nature is originally empty.

For the yogin who realizes the indivisibility of phenomena and emptiness like a rainbow in the sky or the reflection of the moon in water, every experience of samsara and nirvana is a play of magical illusion. Watching the play of indivisible appearances and emptiness, the yogin whose intellect and mental processes are still is content.

Are your minds still, my beloved children? Look to see if the emptiness and appearances of your mind can actually be divided. Appearances and emptiness are indivisible.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of indivisible appearances and emptiness.

It follows, then, that naturally indivisible appearances and emptiness, the inherent radiance of self-existent Knowledge, clear and alert, constitutes the three modes of being that are the Buddha's spontaneously originated dynamic.[106]

Therefore, children of my heart, without regard for sessions and intervals of formal practice, in constant meditation sustain this recognition day and night.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of natural, spontaneous gnostic liberation.

SONG TWELVE: THE CRYSTAL METAPHOR AND THE DYNAMIC OF BEING

EHMAHO! Listen again to this vagrant's song! There are two ways of defining the three modes of being: in terms of Knowledge as the universal ground of being, and in terms of the process of appearances emanating from the Knowledge that is the universal ground.

Clearly understanding these two definitions you will intuitively recognize samsara and nirvana as pure-lands of the three existential modes.

This is the definition of the three modes of being that structure original Knowledge. I have used this metaphor previously,[107] but here it is again:

Original intrinsic knowledge is like a crystal ball: its emptiness is the dharmakāya's nature; its clear and natural glow is the saṁbhogakāya; and, as the unimpeded medium of whatever appears, it is the nirmāṇakāya.

That is how the three modes of being are defined as original Knowledge, and although they are not identical to it, neither are they separate from it.

Just as the five colours of the spectrum arise out of a crystal, so the manifestations of the ground of being arise out of original Knowledge. In the process of manifestation the pristine emanations of the Buddha's Pure-lands and the bewildering emanations of phenomena and of beings, all things whatsoever, are empty in essence, and this emptiness is the dharmakāya; their nature is radiant light, which is the saṁbhogakāya; and their unobstructed manifest diversity is the nirmāṇakāya.

That is how the three modes of being are defined as the process of manifestation of appearances in the universal ground of being.

The distinction between these two definitions is rarely made, but it is vital that it be clearly understood. It was made clear to me through Longchenpa's generous explanations.

If you understand this, then you know that the entire universe of phenomena and noumena and the energy that animates it is, and has been from the beginning, the spontaneously originated mandala[108] of the three modes of being, and that it is futile to look for the pure-lands of the three modes anywhere else.

If people were capable of spontaneous reflexive recognition of just the six types of sentient life as the three modes of being, then without the necessity to perform even the slightest practice of meditation, they would all attain the Buddha's awakening.

Further, since the three modes of the ground of being are ultimately the dharmakāya, do not regard the three as different. Since the three modes of the process of manifestation in the ground of being are the rūpakāya, do not regard them as different either. Ultimately the dharmakāya and rūpakāya are also not different: in the dimension of the dharmakāya, emptiness is the one taste.

Finally, reaching the end of the path, after appearances manifesting in the ground have spontaneously dissolved back into the ground, when the dynamic of the universal dharmakāya is revealed, the ultimate goal is attained. Thereafter, without stirring from the space of the dharmakāya, the two aspects of the rūpakāya (saṁbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya) are displayed like a rainbow, and there is an uninterrupted stream of activity for the sake of all beings.[109]

SONG THIRTEEN: INSTRUCTION IN CREATIVE EMOTIVITY

EHMAHO! Now listen once again to this vagrant singing! At one time or another all of you have been injured by others. Conscientiously recollect in detail how others have wrongfully accused you and victimized you, humiliating you and grinding you into the ground, and how you were shamed and deeply mortified. Brood on these things, letting hatred arise, and as it arises look directly at its essence, at hatred itself. Then, discover firstly where the hatred comes from, secondly, where it is now, and finally, where it goes to. Look carefully for its colour and shape, and any other characteristics.

Surely the vision of your anger is ultimately empty and ungraspable. Do not reject anger! It is mirror-like awareness itself.

Then, all you lovers, think of the beautiful man or woman in your heart. You gluttons, consider the food you crave—meat, cake, or fruit. You strutting peacocks, recall and dwell on the clothes you

like to wear. You avaricious traders, think about the form of wealth you desire—horses, jewelry, or cash. Carefully considering these matters, allow desire to arise, and when it arises look directly at its essence, at the greedy and lustful self. Then discover firstly where it comes from, secondly where it is now, and finally where it goes to. Look carefully for its colour and shape, and any other characteristics.

This vision of your desire is ultimately empty and ungraspable. Do not reject it! It is discriminating awareness.

When you are tired, depressed and dull, accept your sloth, and as it arises gaze directly at its essence. Who is it that is slothful? Firstly, where does it come from? then, where is it now? and finally, where does it go to?

This vision of your sloth is ultimately empty and ungraspable. Do not reject your stupidity! It is awareness of the vast plenum of space, the reality-continuum.

Then think about your class and status, your race and influence and your wealth. Consider how handsome or beautiful you are, and how pleasant and effective your voice. Recall to what extent you are virtuous and successful in study, contemplation and meditation, in reading and writing, in learning in the sciences and arts, and also in the ritual arts, and in converting and controlling others, and so forth. After considering your talents and virtues, thinking that you are a little superior to others, allow pride to arise. As it appears, look directly at its essence, at pride itself. Discover firstly where it comes from, then where it is now, and finally where it goes to. Look carefully at its colour and shape and for any other characteristics.

This vision of your pride is ultimately empty and ungraspable. Do not reject your pride! It is awareness of sameness.

Then consider how much more influential and wealthy others are than yourself. Recall their talent and success, their large numbers of followers, their wisdom and ability in the arts and sciences, their superior singing, oratory and effective speech, their superior knowledge of life and how to live it, and their worldly wisdom and persuasiveness. After you have considered all the talents and virtues of others, allow the fear that they are superior to yourself to arise, together with envy and jealousy. Upon its arising gaze directly into the essence of jealousy, at jealousy itself. From where does it come? where is it now? and finally where does it go? Look carefully at its colour and shape and at any other characteristic.

This vision of your envy is ultimately empty and ungraspable. Do not reject your jealousy! It is all-accomplishing awareness.

If you intuit the nature of your passions in this way, emotional defilement becomes primal awareness. How ridiculous to expect to find primal awareness and emptiness after you have suppressed passion! How tragic to spend your life searching for something in a place where it is inconceivable that you should find it!

After you have realized the five poisons as emptiness by this method, it is unnecessary to examine every passion that arises as described in this introduction; there is no need to search for the seat of the passion, its present location, its eventual destination, its colour and shape, and so on.

Once you have understood the five poisons as emptiness, avoid pursuing the passion from the moment it arises. Relax into your own nature, into the nature of mind, and without doubt the emotion will naturally subside and vanish.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of transformed

emotional expression, and such also is my instruction in purification through creative emotional efflorescence.[110]

If you have practised purification through creative emotional efflorescence by the method described above in the past, henceforth whenever the five poisons—defiling passions—arise, by virtue of your habitual reflexive recognition of their hidden core, emptiness and primal awareness will arise as one. Then, release and the arising of appearances are simultaneous—release and the arising of appearances are simultaneous!

In the biographies and teaching of the Lamas of the past, the axiom "The greater the passion and the greater intensity of discursive thought the greater the dharmakāya" occurs frequently. Know that it means exactly what it says!

For beginners, when powerful and intense emotion arises it is best to examine the passion and then to rest in equanimity.

This is the Lama's personal advice, so keep it in your heart.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of spontaneous release of the five poisons.

SONG FOURTEEN: INSTRUCTION IN THE ONE TASTE OF SENSE-IMPRESSIONS

EHMAHO! Once more listen to me, beloved sons and daughters who I treasure like my heart! Wrap soft, silken clothes around your body and observe the mind that thinks "How soft!" Wrap coarse yak wool or sheepskin around your body and observe the mind that thinks "How coarse!" When observing the mind, emptiness is the one taste in both perceptions.

Look at the form of a beautiful statue or a great painting and observe the mind that thinks "How beautiful!" Look at the form of a hideous frog and observe the mind that thinks "How repulsive!" When looking at the mind, emptiness is the one taste in both perceptions.

Put something sweet like molasses or honey in your mouth, and observe the mind that thinks "How sweet!" Then taste something like ginger and look at the mind that thinks "How pungent!" When observing the mind, in both perceptions emptiness is the one taste.

Smell something aromatic like sandalwood incense and look at the mind that thinks "How pleasing!" Then smell something repugnant like asafoetida or wild garlic and look at the mind that thinks "How foul!" When observing the mind, emptiness is the one taste in both perceptions.

Listen to the sound of a bell, a lute or flute, and observe the mind that thinks "How lyrical!" Listen to the sound of stones grating or hands clapping and look at the mind that thinks "What cacophony!" When observing the mind, emptiness is the one taste in both perceptions.

Imagine that you are reborn as a world emperor ruling the lands of the four continents, that you are surrounded by an entourage of queens and ministers, in a palace constructed out of the five types of precious substance (gold, silver, turquoise, coral and pearl), where you are eating a feast of a hundred tastes. When such a vision arises in your mind watch the mind that thinks "How delightful!" Then imagine yourself a beggar without even a single companion, with nowhere to lay your head but a cow shed, where rain drips in from above and moisture seeps up from below, your body afflicted by many diseases, your hands and feet rotting off from leprosy, tormented by so many troubles that truly you know the meaning of

suffering. When such a vision arises in your mind, watch the mind that thinks "Oh, the pain!" Observing the mind, in both happiness and sadness, emptiness is the one taste.

After you have realized the emptiness of the six sense-fields in this way, whenever any positive or negative feeling arises from any of these fields you need not examine them as in this introduction. Every perception is without foundation, released from the beginning and empty; and refraining from pursuing any of them at the moment of their inception, relax into your own space, into the nature of your mind. Undoubtedly every sense impression is spontaneously released.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of the spontaneous release of the six sense-fields.

SONG FIFTEEN: THE NONDUALITY OF QUIESCENCE AND MOVEMENT

EHMAHO! Again listen attentively, my noble sons and daughters! Relax, let yourself be at rest in the free space of mind's original nature, and observe the quiescent state of the mind. Gazing into the mind at rest, you abide in the infinite space of Knowledge. Know, therefore, beloved children of my heart, that a quiescent mind is an empty mind in a state of Knowledge.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of quiescence as an adornment of mind.[111]

Then, as thought moves in the mind, observe how it is manifest: it moves not the slightest degree out of the space of empty and radiant Knowledge. Know, therefore, that an active mind is still an empty mind in a state of Knowledge, beloved sons and daughters.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of the movement of mind as its play.

No matter how large or violent the rolling wave, it cannot escape the ocean for a moment. In the same way, mind, passive or active, cannot escape Knowledge and emptiness to the slightest degree. If it is quiescent, it is in a state of Knowledge, so you can relax. If it is active, whatever arises is the radiant glow of Knowledge itself, so again, relax.

The assertion that mind in quiescence is in meditation and that an active mind is out of meditation, signifies failure to understand the inherent emptiness of both quiescence and activity, and it indicates that quiescence, movement and Knowledge, these three,[112] are not yet fused into one.

Therefore, best beloved sons and daughters of my heart, because quiescence and movement are both states of Knowledge, and because in the past you have fully comprehended both these states separately, now in your existential praxis you should condition yourself in the experience of quiescence, movement and Knowledge as one.

Such is my introduction initiating recognition of nondual quiescence and movement.

SONG SIXTEEN: INTRODUCTION TO DZOKCHEN—WITH CAUTIONS

EHMAHO! Listen, only beloved children of my heart, listen with your ears attentive and calm! Set the sweet melodies of this vagrant minstrel, Tsokdruk Rangdrol, upon the white peaks of your heart with the Sweet-voiced Maiden![113]

When we have established that all experience is the one taste of emptiness, we have no attachment or aversion to samsara or nirvana. The error of apprehending external entities either as aliens or as allies, as enemies or friends, is precluded. No "self and other" dichotomy arises in any situation: all things are known as the one taste of emptiness.

The following is a complete exposition distilled into aphorisms. In the pinnacle of approaches to Buddhahood,[114] the Great Perfection, known as Dzokchen, the whole of samsara and nirvana has been realized as unfounded and acausal.

From the beginning, "Buddha" is the one taste of the dharmakāya. In the Dzokchen dimension there is no distinction between gods and demons. In the Land of Dzokchen there are no Buddhas and no sentient beings. In the ground of Dzokchen there are no moral dualities. There is no near or far on the Dzokchen path. There is no attainment or non-attainment of the Dzokchen goal. There is no correct or incorrect behaviour in Dzokchen. There is no meditation or non-meditation in the reality of Dzokchen. Such is Dzokchen vision.

When we realize this Dzokchen vision, all constructs pertaining to the gross and subtle planes of the three doors subside, and, thereafter, like tangled wool made manageable by moistening, our three doors—body, speech and mind—reach a state of quiet, self-directed responsiveness.

Coincident with the development of a happy, glowing, thought-free samadhi is the birth of authentic compassion, which is like the love a mother holds for her only son, except that here the love is directed towards all beings roaming in samsara who lack the Dzokchen vision. This compassion is a very special feature of Dzokchen vision, and this you must know.

After you have resolved that all things are empty, if then in your conduct you abandon virtue and no longer shrink from vice, you have fallen under the spell of a demon of infinite and intense evil. It is crucial to avoid this demonic pitfall.

Such are my introductions initiating recognition of Dzokchen, the Great Perfection.

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The following introductory advice about Dzokchen is crucial. While you have yet to realize that all visual and auditory experiences of the relative, external world are totally empty, when you contemplate Dzokchen vision you will tend to ask "Why meditate?" In order to counteract this tendency, remember to perform these exercises:

While making supplication to the Lama, observe your mind. From time to time, when you are in a relaxed state of concentration, observe your mind intently. At these times you will feel totally contented, and appearances will arise as emptiness so vividly that you will think, "Although I can touch those things out there with my hand, there is really nothing there!" Profound affirmations and confident thoughts will certainly follow, like, "This is definitely the Dzokchen vision!" At such times you will gain confidence in your vision. But do not spoil it by clinging to it. Just relax in spacious detachment.

Even if you do not practise what is transmitted in this introduction, if you have understood that everything manifests from your own heart centre as reflexive forms of emptiness, at the time of death, no matter what fears arise in the *bardo*, you will attain the Buddha's awakening in the universal ground, pure from the beginning.

He who practises the substance of this introduction without having received the transmission is like someone who starts in error on the first day and remains in error until the fifteenth. To say "I have realized emptiness!" when you have not yet understood that there is no reality in any experience of the relative world, is a great falsehood.

In order to avoid such pitfalls at the outset, as described above, sit at your Lama's feet, and having established the nature of your original existential condition through direct transmission, you will avoid any deviation, double binds and pitfalls that may arise later on. Therefore, my dearest children, keep this advice in your hearts.

SONG SEVENTEEN: APHORISTIC INSTRUCTION ON THE DZOKCHEN PATH

EHMAHO! Once more, most beloved sons and daughters, listen! After you have fully intuited and established the original existential condition of the Dzokchen vision, you must utterly sever the ties of attachment and aversion to your family and homeland.

Go alone to the forest or to a mountain hermitage. Abandon all physical work and dwell at ease; cease all verbal expression and remain in silence; transcend all objects of thought and let your mind merge with space. In this state, relax, without attempting to change anything, and without diffusion or fixation of your consciousness.

When the mind is free of all ambition and all belief-supports, that is Dzokchen vision. Abide in a state of non-meditation. Realize Dzokchen's goal of non-attainment.

Further, when you are composed in equanimity, living the vision, do not become entangled in any web of judgmental thought by saying to yourself, "Now I've arrived at a state of Knowledge!" or

"Now I'm caught in manic depression!" No, stay wakeful in the continuum of reality without any notion of present or future attainment, flexible and responsive in unobstructed freedom.

You cannot perceive non-conceptual truth with your structured intellect, and you cannot reach the place of non-action through temporal activity. If you want to attain the non-conceptual goal of non-action, rest in naked Knowledge free of dualistic grasping.

The supreme vision is free of all conceptual duality. Supreme meditation is freedom from the cultivation of some attributes and rejection of others. Supreme action is beyond all striving and effort. The supreme goal is ever immanent, beyond aspiration.

Looking for *it*, the vision cannot be seen: cease your search. *It* cannot be discovered through meditation, so abandon your trance states and mental images. *It* cannot be accomplished by anything you do, so give up the attempt to treat the world as magical illusion. *It* cannot be found by seeking, so abandon all hope of results.

Do not be biased or partial, thus spoiling your free and easy uncontrived consciousness of the here and now by clinging attachments. This radiant insubstantiality, Knowledge of the here and now, this is the *summum bonum* of all vision. This all-pervasive, all-embracing object of mind transcending the intellect, this is the *summum bonum* of all meditations. This unforced, detached, free and easy spontaneity, this is the *summum bonum* of all behaviour. This unsought, spontaneous accomplishment, present from the beginning, this is the summit of all attainments.

The matrix of vision is observation of emptiness and radiance without clinging to it. The matrix of meditation is maintenance of reflexive release without clinging to it. The matrix of action is

relaxation with a free and easy response to the six sense-fields. The matrix of the goal is collapse of all expectation and apprehension.

When the mind has no limitations, we see the sovereign vision. When it has no point of reference, we practise sovereign meditation. When we are free of all inhibition and indulgence, we perform sovereign activity. When mind is free of hope and fear, we have attained the sovereign goal.

As there is nothing to see, abandon all fixed ideas, all preconceived notions and all parameters of vision. As there is nothing upon which to meditate, let be whatever arises adventitiously. As there is no particular way to behave, give up evaluation, judgment, and criticism. As there is nothing to attain, forsake all expectation of results.

Whatsoever can be is Knowledge, so do not cling to any one thing. Nothing is *it*, so do not judge and criticize. No intellectual concepts are valid, so do not presume.

Primally pure intrinsic knowledge, naturally radiant, transcends the intellect and objects of mind, so there is nothing to see. As its essence has no root or ground, there is nothing to meditate upon. As its reflexive release is beyond all limitations and extremes, there is nothing to do based on conscious and rational design. As it is beyond striving, accomplishment and ambition, there is no fruition.

Its essence is emptiness, so abandon self-denial and self-improvement. Its nature is empty radiance, so let your diligent effort drop away. Everything is unobstructed, so forget your preferences. Just as phenomena arise, let them be, and do not cling to them.

The yogin's perception is like the flight-path of a bird in the sky. The bird's flight-path vanishes without trace: each previous perception

vanishes without repercussion—do not attempt to prolong a perception by pursuing it and clinging to it. The bird's future flight-path is as yet nonexistent: do not anticipate the next perception. The present bird-print in the sky is colourless and shapeless: the present perception has an ordinary, unremarkable form—leave it alone and refrain from contaminating it or modifying it by applying antidotes.

Just as phenomena arise let them be and do not cling! This is the radical, essential practice during the daily round. If you do not cling to whatever, or however, phenomena appear, emotional defilements, naturally freed, are sublime, primal awareness.

The vision is unoriginated, non-conceptual, capable of any departure whatsoever, for in intense concentration the vision has no specific content. Meditation is a natural, innate process of being free, for in intense meditation there is non-meditation. Conduct is a performance of magical illusion, innocent of any distinction between giving and taking, abstinence and indulgence, for intense activity is purposeless. The nature of the goal is absence of both hope of attainment and fear of failure, for with intense practice the goal vanishes.

In past, present and future the mind is acausal and baseless. Its spontaneous manifestation of vivid appearances is a constant wonder. From the first to the last the nature of all experience is pure! miraculously arisen! eternally free! completely free! effortlessly accomplished! This ordinary consciousness, unforced and authentic, is the Buddha's dynamic, a vast space without limitation.

What is more, with effort, examining and contemplating the mind, you do not see its intrinsic original nature. In the unthinkable, inscrutable ordinary nature of reality there is neither meditation nor non-meditation, neither distraction nor non-distraction. Many are liberated through natural no-meditation.[115]

In the unthinkable, inscrutable, ordinary nature of reality there is no difference between freedom and bondage. No matter what arises, when you perceive your original nature the joy arises automatically —and what joy!

Trapped by the thought of desiring thoughtlessness, conflicting thoughts multiply, and in mounting frenzy you run aimlessly hither and thither. Relax and merge into the primal space of Knowledge, which is free of coming and going. Cut loose and just let it be. Then, ready for anything, you remain firm and stable, as solid as rock.

Grasp this paradox,[116] my sons and daughters! There is not so much as a mote of dust upon which to meditate, but it is crucial to sustain unwavering attention with presence of mind.

SONG EIGHTEEN: OBSTACLES TO DZOKCHEN PRACTICE

EHMAHO! Once more gather round and listen, my children! It is absurd to try to purify external objects, which are insubstantial appearances, the natural forms of emptiness. They are empty from the beginning, like the reflection of the moon in water.

It is absurd to apply forceful antidotes to thoughts and concepts, and internal objects. They vanish by themselves without trace. It is absurd to try to improve mind's manifestations with your renunciation, your practice of self-improvement, or your hopes and fears. They are free from the beginning and primal awareness by nature.

Do not dress up Knowledge, which is naked clarity itself, in the clothes of elaborate intellectual analysis. Rather, rest in relaxation in that magnificent sameness that is without partiality. Stay free and easy, without a care in the world, in the place where there is no residue to perception.

No matter what thoughts arise in that space, know them to be the natural radiance of impartial and spontaneously existent Knowledge. Then we are able to let go of the mental residue of perception. Abandoning the manifestations of mind to vast all-embracing space as the play of elusive, effervescent, shimmering reality, we immediately reach the plenum of Kuntu Zangpo's dynamic mind.

The foregoing is called the universal, self-liberating yoga of the naturally accomplished and originally liberated Great Perfection.

Although we do not move, we arrive at the Buddha's seat. Although we do not practise, the goal is spontaneously accomplished. Although we do not abandon emotional defilements, they are purified as they stand. Thus our Mind is the same as the dynamic minds of the great Lamas, and following in their footsteps our karma is exhausted.

You should understand the enormous significance of this, my sons and daughters. By the generosity of the wise old man Choki Gyelpo, I, Tsokdruk Rangdrol, attained the spontaneously originated, dynamic mind of Vagrant Non-action.[117]

This non-action may be crucial, but it is not understood by some. Everything is already done, but they say, "I must work hard!" Everything has been liberated from the beginning, but they say, "I want to be free!" Everything is at rest from the beginning, but they say, "I want peace of mind!" The mind is in meditation from the beginning, but they say, "I must meditate!" The vision exists from the beginning, but they say, "I must see it!" The goal is attained from the first, but they say, "I must reach it!"

People who trust in an analytical view are learned, but they know only the taste of dead words and divisive concepts. They claim

understanding, but it is an idle boast. They meditate, but their meditation consists of mental structures. They examine the mind, but cling to duality. They are successful, but it is all in samsara.

It is certain that the intellectual with an analytical view of reality has no connection with the Heart-essence of the Great Perfection, the Dzokchen Nyingthik.[118] No specific activity is necessary, for action does not lead to the exhaustion of karmic activity. It is beyond reckoning in terms of action and inaction.

In the non-meditation beyond meditation, meditation is detrimental. Beyond vision, where there is nothing to see, upon what can you focus? Beyond seeking, where there is no seeking, there is no finding. Knowledge is direct recognition of the here and now.

How ridiculous that someone should have this explained and not listen. Such a person has no connection with Dzokchen.

When you observe something that is arising in a dynamic mind of immense space, utterly pure from the beginning, then there is no duality of samsara and nirvana.

To have taken this Mind as the subject of my song will indubitably please the Victorious Buddhas of the past, present and future.

"However," you may ask, "although at first I may rest free and easy when perceiving external, delusive objects of mind, later will I not again regress into bewilderment?"

The answer to your question is that ordinary individuals attached to their ego will certainly go astray. But as for the yogin who understands

all appearances as causeless and baseless and who refrains from attempting to change himself or phenomena, rejecting some things and cultivating others, because he is naturally composed in detached equanimity he will not err.

"Are there no potential traps or dilemmas in this dimension?" you may further enquire.

There is no pitfall or trap possible on this path. Dilemmas and traps are caused by clinging and attachment. If there is no attachment to anything that may arise, what can possibly be the cause of downfall?

However, when Knowledge arises co-emergent with an object, looking at the essence of the thought of what has arisen should not be considered the meditation. The crucial practice is to constantly sustain the aspect of Knowledge that is naked radiance.

Furthermore, when Knowledge is quiescent, neither diffused nor concentrated, the lack of concepts and thoughts associated with the quiescent aspect is not the central point of the meditation. In that state you should sustain clarity and strength of mind, crystal clear and acutely awake.

If you fail to understand this vital point and think, "Observing either diffusion or quiescence of mind is the essence of meditation," you will go astray, my sons. Mere quiescence is a trance state of the gods and mere diffusion is ordinary conceptualization. You may meditate on these but you will not attain Buddhahood.

In short, until you realize your goal, at all times whatsoever you should sustain the aspect of Knowledge that is naked, unobstructed clarity, maintaining a vivid awareness of it as a crystal ball. After your goal is attained, continue to sustain constant identification with that state.

THE FLIGHT OF THE GARUDA

It is said that the central reality of the vision of Cutting Through[119] is Knowledge, and that Knowledge should be sustained in all its radiant clarity by stripping the mind naked. This point is of unique importance. It is an aphorism reduced from a hundred words, so remember it well, beloved sons and daughters.

SONG NINETEEN: THE FOUR INFALLIBLE GUIDING STARS AND THE FOUR UNSHAKEABLE BOLTS

EHMAHO! Once again, sons and daughters of my heart, listen with devotion and respect! Here is instruction on the four infallible guiding stars. The infallible guiding star of vision is called a guiding star because of its unfailing radiance: it is vivid perception of the here and now. The infallible guiding star of meditation is called a guiding star because of its unfailing radiance: it is vivid perception of the here and now. The guiding star of action is called a guiding star because of its unfailing radiance: it is vivid perception of the here and now. The infallible guiding star of the goal is called a guiding star because of its unfailing radiance: it is vivid perception of the here and now.

Here is instruction on the four unshakeable bolts. The unshakeable bolt of unchangeable vision is vivid perception of the here and now, and it is called an unshakeable bolt because of its permanence throughout past, present and future. The unshakeable bolt of unchangeable meditation is vivid perception of the here and now, and it is called an unshakeable bolt because of its permanence throughout past, present and future. The unshakeable bolt of unchangeable conduct is vivid perception of the here and now, and it is called an unshakeable bolt because of its permanence throughout past, present and future. The unshakeable bolt of the unchangeable goal is vivid perception of the here and now, and it is called an unshakeable bolt because of its permanence throughout past, present and future.

There are a vast number of different visions, but in the self-existent intrinsic knowledge of the here and now, which is pure awareness, there is no duality of vision and viewer. Do not look at the vision but look for the viewer. Looking for the creator of the vision, if you fail to find him, then your vision is at the point of resolution. This vision in which there is nothing at all to see but which is not a blank nothingness of ultimate void, is vivid and unalloyed perception of the here and now: this is Dzokchen vision.

There are innumerable dissimilar methods of meditation, but in the unobstructed clarity, which is ordinary perception of the here and now, there is no duality of meditation and meditator. Do not perform the meditation, but look for the meditator. Searching for the meditator, if you fail to find him, then your meditation is at the point of resolution. This meditation in which there is no meditating whatsoever, free of depression and elation, free of cloudy vision and sluggishness, is the natural radiance and unalloyed perception of the here and now—it is meditation fixed in uncontrived sameness.

There is an infinite variety of different modes of behaviour, but in the cosmic seed of intrinsic knowledge and pure awareness there is no duality of action and actor. Do not perform the action, but look for the actor. Searching for the actor, if you fail to find him, then your conduct is at the point of resolution. This conduct, in which there is no activity whatsoever but which is not governed by delusive habit patterns, is the unforced, natural radiance of perception of the here and now—this is immediate, immaculate action, where nothing whatsoever is contrived or forced and nothing is inhibited or indulged.

There are innumerable goals, but in the spontaneously originated, effortlessly accomplished intrinsic knowledge of the three existential modes, there is no duality of accomplishment and he who

achieves the goal. Without striving for the goal, seek the sādhaka, the yogin on the path. Looking for him who is accomplishing the goal and failing to find him, then you are at the point of achievement. This goal in which there is no striving for accomplishment, completely free of renunciation and cultivation, hopes and fears, is the spontaneously natural radiance of Knowledge that is perception of the here and now: this is empty, natural radiance of the three existential modes of the Buddha manifest. It is the ultimate goal of Buddhahood.

SONG TWENTY: SIGNS OF NONDUALITY

EHMAHO! And again, beloved sons and daughters, listen well!

If you sustain this practice unwaveringly from the beginning, until you abandon yourself totally in complete freedom there will be no coming and going from the supreme truth and no departure from the here and now.

When there is no distinction between appearances and emptiness, then perfect vision is realized. When there is no distinction between dream and the waking state, then perfect meditation is realized. When there is no distinction between pleasure and pain, then perfect conduct is realized. When there is no distinction between this life and the next, then your original existential condition is realized. When there is no distinction between your mind and the sky, then the dharmakāya is realized. When there is no distinction between your own mind and the Buddha, then the goal is realized.

SONG TWENTY-ONE: SUPPORTIVE EXERCISES AND ADVICE

EHMAHO! Once again, beloved children, listen to me! Regard this corporeal body like the reflection of the moon in water. Perceive all

vocal expression as echo. Dissolve the multitude of your mental concepts in the purity of their own nature.

Live all visual and auditory experience without attachment, as hallucination, dream, the reflection of the moon in water, a fairy palace in the sky, a distortion of sight, an apparition, a bubble and an echo. Perform all your daily activity in this state. Without making any division between sessions of meditation and the intervals between them, practise constantly, day and night.

Do not seek to alter your thoughts in any way. Leave them in their natural state, without forcing them or adulterating them. Let them alone as empty radiance, without clinging to them, and thus allow self-expression to release itself by itself. Let them be, without reification, without meditation, without any effort, and leaving no trace whatsoever.

Treat all past thought as the trackless path of a bird in the sky, all present perception as clear dustless space, and all future thought as the water in a mill with its sluice gate closed. Without cultivating or modifying any thought, with a free and easy attitude leave thoughts alone in their natural state of open space.

Treat all gross and subtle concepts, the three poisons, the five poisons, and so on, like thieves entering an empty house. Treat external appearances of the six sense-fields, which leave no residue in the mind, like a city of magical illusion.

In short, regarding creation, existence and cessation; the ground, the path and the goal; vision, meditation, conduct and fruition; time, place and verbal expression; the disposition and the disposer; liberation and the liberator; and so forth: when the innate radiance of all these events is unaffected by evaluation and judgment, and

one is free of effort and striving, without clinging or any partiality, then moment by moment every single experience is brought to a final and certain resolution, without attachment, in the ultimate purity of the empty continuum of mind—like droplets of water merging in the great ocean.

So do not be disheartened when during meditation many thoughts disturb you and you think, "This is not meditation." The mind may be actively generating thought, but because mind is empty, thought is also empty. Since whatever arises is a state of Knowledge, do not attempt any alteration based on judgment and evaluation, but leave it alone in its natural, authentic, uncontrived state. In that way, thought will certainly be released into its own natural purity.

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If you are a practitioner of lesser capacity, unable to stay in the natural state, you should practise a combination of examination followed by rest in equanimity, as described in the introductions.[120]

Alternatively, you can force thought to its own demise: provoke relevant or irrelevant thoughts and then pursue them, one after the other, in various ways, prolonging each thought until the mind is exhausted. Finally, when you have no more grasping, rest in ease.

Another method is to meditate upon the real Lama in the centre of your heart. Keep your mind fixed on him for as long as possible, and then, finally, letting go, rest in the state of Knowledge.

Or again, meditate upon a tiny point of bright light[121] in the centre of your heart. Imagine it descending until it reaches the Seat of Indra (the navel centre). This method will certainly destroy diffused and rampant thought. When agitation is stilled, rest in the state of

Knowledge. When torpor is present, sharpen your gaze, and after stripping Knowledge naked, sustain the radiance.

Or, as a further option, imagine your mind as a light-seed, and when the image is still, shout "PHAT!"[122] Instantaneously the mind shoots from the fontanelle like an arrow, and you should imagine it mixing with the clarity of the sky. Then identify your intellect with the nature of the sky. It is impossible that your torpor will not be eliminated by this method. When your torpor has vanished, rest in a state of detachment.

Since this advice is the result of personal experience, remember it well.

Without being trapped by thought of desire for thoughtlessness, increasing the dimensions of Knowledge, abandon yourself to it smoothly, and be happy and free in that vast, open space.

Initially (in your practice of meditation), thought is like a rushing river at the bottom of a gorge. In the middle, it flows calmly and majestically like the River Gaṅgā. Finally, just as all rivers become of one flavour in the ocean, so thought is resolved in the state where the mother-light merges with the son-light.

In particular, whatever disease, hostile spirits, or apparitions afflict you, do not make any attempt to ward them off by magical rites. Rather, practise the following meditation that attacks the problem directly and reduces the affliction to the same taste as all other experience.

Go to a spot that tends to breed fear—to a forest, a burning ground, or an island—or to an isolated garden, a rock-cave, or an empty house, or go sit under a tree, for instance, and visualize the following. Transmute your own body, the vessel and its contents, all

phenomena and noumena, into elixir. Then offer the elixir to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. After they have been satisfied, they dissolve into light with a disposition of loving kindness, and the whole of samsara and nirvana is completely filled with the elixir of clear light. Then, with your elixir that liberates by taste you satisfy all beings under the sky. The Oath-bound Spirits and Dharma-protectors, who are qualities and talents, become your guests, and then the supreme field of compassion consisting of the sentient beings of the six realms, as well as all karmic creditors, hostile spirits, obstructive forces and elementals—all are satiated.

Then with the conviction that samsara and nirvana are of one taste, in the unalloyed nature of mind that is the dharmakāya, walk and sit, run and jump, talk and laugh, cry and sing. Alternately subdued and agitated, act like a lunatic. Finally, abide in a state of peace and happiness.[123]

At night-time, sleep peacefully and naturally, free of all discursiveness, free of diffused or concentrated thought. Sleep in the space inherent within, maintaining perfect attention to pure potential.

When you practise in the above manner, disease and hostile spirits are automatically assuaged and pacified. Your view and meditation are then brought to resolution, your realization is like the sky, your meditation is naturally radiant and you act like a child. Without any frame or points of reference you act spontaneously, like a madman. Making no distinction between self and others, you are a saint. Detached from whatever you say, your speech is like melodious echo. Without desire for anything at all you are like a Garuda soaring aloft; you are like a fearless, intrepid lion. All is free from the beginning, like bright clouds in the sky. Such a yogin is a real Sugata, a Vidyādhara. He is worthy of enormous respect and homage. He is even far superior to the wish-fulfilling gem.

SONG TWENTY-TWO: INTERIORIZATION OF THE MANDALA

EHMAHO! And yet again, my beloved sons and daughters, listen to the song of this vagrant! Vairocana is not outside; he exists within. He is the reality-continuum (dharmadhātu), the nature of mind free of movement, the true nature of sloth, pure as it stands. That is the real Bhagavan Vairocana.

Vajrasattva is not outside; he exists within. He is the mirror, the unobstructed medium of creative Knowledge, the true nature of anger, pure as it stands. That is the real Bhagavan Vajrasattva.

Ratnasambhava is not outside; he exists within. He is the sameness that rejects nothing and indulges nothing, judges nothing and evaluates nothing, the true nature of pride, pure as it stands. That is the real Bhagavan Ratnasambhava.

Amitābha is not outside; he exists within. He is sensory discrimination, where pleasure and emptiness vanish into the continuum of space, the true nature of desire, pure as it stands. That is the real Bhagavan Amitābha.

Amoghasiddhi is not outside; he exists within. He is total accomplishment, Knowledge arising unimpeded and naturally liberated, the true nature of jealousy, pure as its stands. That is the real Bhagavan Amoghasiddhi.[124]

SONG TWENTY-THREE: EXTERIORIZATION OF THE MANDALA

EHMAHO! Once again my best beloved heart-sons, listen with rising joy to my vajra-song! When you realize that the Five Buddhas

are inherent in the mind's nature and in emotional defilement, then the whole of phenomenal creation and the life therein is a book of instruction and is itself the ultimate mandala. On the parchment of diverse red and white phenomena[125] the bamboo quill of self-existent primal awareness and Knowledge inscribes baseless, unattached ciphers liberated from the beginning, creating images to be read in the space of co-emergent appearances and emptiness.

This spontaneously accomplished mandala, which is the entire three dimensions of microcosmic world systems, is consecrated by the natural sprinkling of rainwater; its streets and alleyways form the natural lines of its design; our footprints are the dots of coloured powder; our own bodies of apparent emptiness are the existential mode of the Yidam deity; our speech of auditory emptiness is vajra-recitation (of mantra); our thought, detached and naturally liberated, is the deity's spirit; and all the movements of our limbs are the deity's mudra.

Food and drink are offerings of the nature of reality, and all phenomenal form is the deity's body; the expression of all articulated sound is music. There is nothing to protect and nothing to be impaired in this natural samaya.

Whatsoever the yogin who practises in this manner does, he need not rely upon a path of cause and effect and diligent striving, because in the space of clear light reality his instruction and the creative stage of meditation, and the samayas, are naturally fulfilled. To attain quickly the great miracle of the ultimate power, without striving, is the special characteristic of the Great Perfection, my heart sons and daughters.

When we practise like this consistently, just as clouds vanish into the sky, the welter of thoughts and concepts of samsara and nirvana

dissolve into the primal ground of being.

After the dharmakāya is revealed as the clear light of intrinsic knowledge like the radiant, unobscured solar mandala, we are able to raise the dead and comprehend the mysteries, and demonstrating various miracles we can direct beings.

After perfecting all the qualities of the ten stages and the five paths without exception, individuals of superior capacity are liberated into the pure ground of being in this lifetime, individuals of middling capacity at the moment of death, and those of lesser capacity in the bardo (the after-death state). Thereafter, remaining forever inseparable from the pure awareness of the three modes of being in the continuum of reality, emanating apparitional bodies to transform all beings in whatever way is required, we work unremittingly to give ultimate meaning to all sentient beings.

Keep the significance of these words in your mind, and surely the inner sun of happiness will shine upon us.

He who has expressed such aspiration in song is the vagrant Tsokdruk Rangdrol. Through its virtue may all those many aspirants who have such good fortune swiftly dissolve all the defilements inherent in loss of awareness, and in emotion and thought, in the primal continuum of purity. May they attain the goal of Buddhahood in this lifetime.

COLOPHON

This song of the vision of Cutting Through to the clear light of the Great Perfection, which has the potential of leading us quickly through the stages and paths, is called *The Flight of the Garuda.* It is based on many scriptural treasures of Dzokchen: *Introduction to Direct Vision of Knowledge* by Orgyen Rimpoche, Longchenpa's *Seven Treasures* and *Three Chariots,* and *An Afterword on the Great Perfection: The Three Cycles of Space, The Vast Cloud of Profound Truth, Heartdrop of the Dzokchen Ḍākinī,* and *Buddha in the Palm of the Hand,* all by Longchenpa.[126] The secret instruction of my Lamas and my own meditation experience decorate its margins. It is written by Jatang Tsokdruk Rangdrol for the sake of many devoted disciples. May it cause boundless advantage to the tradition and to sentient beings.

Since these vajra-songs were composed for all those concerned with liberation, they should be sung by yogins when they are focusing upon Dzokchen vision. As the Knowledge Bearer Śrī Siṃha[127] said regarding the purpose of such songs:

> *The Buddha's Mind is all-pervasive; sentient beings' Knowledge is fragmented: to create openness like the sky is of great advantage.*

So, just as Śrī Siṃha advises, identify Knowledge with the vast space of the sky, infinitely increasing its height and depth, and out of this space, which embraces all sentient beings, sing these songs to benefit your meditation on vision.

Samaya! Sarva maṅgalam!
Maintain the commitment! May all beings be happy!

The Wish-Granting Prayer of Kuntu Zangpo

The Wish-Granting Prayer of Kuntu Zangpo

A Revealed Text of Rikdzin Godemchan

Introduction

Among the thousands of incarnations of Guru Rimpoche emanated to reveal initiatory visions the Knowledge-bearer Godemchan has a unique reputation. He discovered a corpus of texts called the Northern Treasure,[128] which had a widely felt and potent effect on the yogin community of his day. Unlike the treasure-texts of many other *tertons*, the Northern Treasure has retained its attraction until our own time. It is difficult to characterize Godemchan's revelations in contradistinction to other *terma*, except to say that it is couched in extremely clear and succinct terms and has an overall unity of content and style. It has an affinity to the Dzokchen tradition known as the Vimala Nyingthik of the Indian pandita Vimalamitra, a contemporary of Padma Sambhava in Tibet. The most important texts of the Northern Treasure treat mahāyoga and anuyoga.

Godemchan was born in Upper Tsang, in the high, wide, inclement valleys of the Tibetan plateau to the north of the highest peaks of the Himalayas. Tsang was the centre of Tibetan culture during the fourteenth century when Godemchan (1337–1409) lived, and since he was born into a noble family that traced its lineage to Mongolian royalty, his family seems to have had standing in the community. His father was a priest and mystic of the Nyingma School, an adept in the yoga of Dorje Phurba. The young Ngodrub Gyeltsen, as he was named, grew up under the tutelage of his learned father and as a student showed promise at a very early age.

The apocalyptic events that earned him his sobriquet "Godemchan," Master Vulture Feather, occurred in his youth. When he was eleven years old three feathers of the eagle vulture appeared on the crown of his head, and when he was twenty-three the three feathers increased to five. The vulture[129] is a sacred bird, sacred in Tibet from time immemorial; a single vulture feather ornamented Guru Rimpoche's Victory Hat. As to his spiritual lineage, Godemchan was an emanation of Nanam Dorje Dudjom, the disciple of Guru Rimpoche depicted wielding a phurbu.

His epithet Rikdzin Chenpo, the "Magnificent Knowledge-bearer," signifies the success of his meditation as a Nyingma School yogin living in the mundane world, maintaining Dzokchen vision. The Three Supreme Emanations[130] of Guru Rimpoche, of whom Godemchan was one, were all yogins of this type. His activity as a treasure-finder began when he was given a list of hiding places by a friend who had discovered it at Gyang Yonpolung,[131] near Lhatse Dzong, and close to one of King Trisong Detsen's Yangdul temples. It was this list of hiding places that probably directed him to a power-spot called Dzengdrak Karpo, beneath the peak of Riwo Trazang, where he found a precise list of treasure-texts. At the age of twenty-nine, in the cave of Zangzang Lhadrak, he discovered a blue chest with many partitions that contained the great wealth of Northern Treasure written on yellow parchment, which indicates the Ḍākinīs' hand in the affair. Groups of texts were designated by their position in a mandala of the cardinal directions and their centre, and the five groups he called the Five Treasuries.[132] From the dark-brown central cavity he extracted one of the most important of his revelations, the Kunzang Gongpa Zangthal, "Immediate Transference to the Dynamic of Kuntu Zangpo." He also discovered various sacred implements and relics there.

Godemchan spent the remainder of his long life disseminating the teaching of his revelation. According to legend it reached every corner of the Tibetan world, and its effects were beneficial in every

department of human activity: wars were prevented, all diseases eradicated—particularly those caused by spirits of disease, cattle multiplied, the fields were fertile, men lived in harmony, and peace and goodwill prevailed. It seemed that the Northern Treasure held the key to a Buddhafield. In fact, the only further revelation Godemchan made was that of the keys to the hidden valleys that Guru Rimpoche had discovered during his sojourn in Tibet. He ended his life as teacher to the King of Gungthang, who governed a principality north of Kirong. His death is described in terms of his own Buddha-dynamic dissolving into the reality-continuum. The third incarnation of Godemchan was forced to move to Central Tibet because of some political intrigue, and the hub of the wheel of Northern Treasure dharma became the gompa of Tubten Dorje Drak,[133] which was destined to become one of the two monastic centres of the Nyingma School in Central Tibet.

Now *The Wish-Granting Prayer of Kuntu Zangpo* is an epitome of the chapter of the *Dzokchen Kunzang Gongpa Zangthedu Tenpai Gyud*,[134] *The Tantra of Immediate Transference to the Dynamic of Kuntu Zangpo and Dzokchen*, which treats the "involuntary" attainment of Buddhahood. This tantra is the principal text in the cycle contained in the volume of treasures called *Immediate Transference to the Dynamic of Kuntu Zangpo*. The tantra itself details the metaphysics of consciousness-transference to the Ādibuddha Kuntu Zangpo's mind. What is remarkable and specific to this tantra is the concept of "transference,"[135] which is no-transference because the realm or dimension that is Kuntu Zangpo's mind is ever-immanent insofar as it is "inherent" in ignorance. There can be no "transference" because there was never any separation from Kuntu Zangpo's mind. Kuntu Zangpo's dynamic is in constant operation and simply needs recognition to be fully functional. So near yet so far!

Thus the *Tantra of the Immediate Naked Clarity of Kuntu Zangpo's Dynamic* is an alternative translation of the title. "All-pervasive" is another connotation of the Tibetan word *zangthal* since it is

co-extensive with emptiness and Knowledge. It denotes an existential quality of naked, stark awareness. The word zangthal does not appear in the prayer. But since it is a wish-granting prayer, if the transmission (*lung*) from the Lama has been received in full awareness, then "transference" to the mind of Kuntu Zangpo is the amazing result. The prayer is also known as *The Prayer of Great Efficacy*.[136]

"Prayer" in the context of this title is certainly a supplication—the main verbs have a vocative inflection—but more literal renditions of the Tibetan word *monlam*,[137] would give us the "Path of Good Wishes" or "Path of Positive Aspirations of Kuntu Zangpo" as viable translations. The unique difference here is that the words emerge from the mouth of the Ādibuddha—it is as if God the Absolute were uttering the prayer. Thus, not only is the prayer bound to be answered, but there is no error in it. It is the perfect prayer, and if only for this reason it will be fulfilled. It is mantra, and mantra in the mouth of the Guru manifests its true meaning. In the dimension of Dzokchen there is no subject/object dichotomy, and true to this verity the prayer is addressed to its author: the supplicant, disposer and vision are one. In the very act of expression lies the "immediate naked clarity" of Kuntu Zangpo's dynamic. In a Nyingma School litany containing this prayer, the rubric enjoins the yogin to visualize himself as Kuntu Zangpo before recitation. He should even have performed the Guruyoga that unites his mind with the Ādibuddha's mind. If the prayer is recited during times of great danger or radical change, such as during an eclipse, an earthquake, the solstice, or at the end of the year, its efficacy is exponentially increased. At such times the mind's propensities become more fluid, and attachments to one's fixed mental dispensation are loosened. The Nyingma School recognizes a lineage of initiation through prayer.[138] Thus the recitation of these verses can be as potent a skilful means of attaining Buddhahood as the practice of difficult yogas, prolonged service to the Lama, or maintaining samaya with the Ḍākinī.

Finally, who is Kuntu Zangpo? He is the Ādibuddha, the Primal, First, Original Buddha. He represents Knowledge-Awareness, and that is the universe. His name means "All-Good," where his goodness is transcendent and supra-moral. He also represents Dzokchen itself in its resultant phase. Kuntu Zangpo's "dynamic" is the power of his mind, or active Knowledge. The word "mind" is rejected because of the danger of conceiving it as a substantial entity. It consists of no more than its motive power or intentionality, and its modes can be defined as primal awareness, communicative vibration, responsiveness, transforming activity, and magical quality.[139] These modes are induced by the prayer.

The prayer of the Ādibuddha Kuntu Zangpo can be analyzed into two parts. The first part explains the nature of ignorance and the vision of Kuntu Zangpo's reality that ignorance veils. The second part describes the meditation upon the five forms of passion that are intrinsically the five aspects of awareness. Each section of this "philosophical" prayer concludes with a vocative statement invoking the Buddha's awareness.

In the first part, the first section[140] introduces the basic reality of the ground of being[141] that transcends all dualities, including samsara and nirvana, ignorance and knowledge. This is the realm of Kuntu Zangpo. The second section defines Buddhahood as Knowledge of the ground of being. The third section describes the emanation of awareness within Knowledge of the ground and the qualities of this magnificent vision as it unfolds. Awareness is the "radiance" of Knowledge,[142] and out of the undifferentiated union that is Knowledge arise the five aspects of awareness that are the Five Dhyāni Buddhas. From them the Forty-two Peaceful Deities, and from them the Sixty Wrathful Deities, arise in turn. The process of emanation from the centre of passive Knowledge to the circumference of active awareness is a function of the increasing scope of pure awareness. Since these Deities are the cognitive essence of the form of the dance of awareness, which is everyman's

passionate psychic environment, delusion is precluded.

The fourth section views the dynamics of the previous part from without: the Guru-Buddha's flow of emanation is motivated by compassion and actually is compassion—ubiquitous compassion. No form whatsoever is not Kuntu Zangpo's compassionate manifestation. The fifth section describes the way in which Kuntu Zangpo's emanation has been misunderstood and perverted through six psychological neuroses, which are produced by karma, and which evolved from what in the beginning was our failure to endure the radiance of clear light. When attention lacks focus, and concentration is absent, an existential dread of life ("the unknown") is our reaction, and fearful insecurity produces the sense of alienation that is the basis of the wheel of samsara. The wheel is driven by poisonous emotions that create karmas constantly reinforcing the propensities that drive the wheel.

The sixth section re-states the twofold ignorance that prevents recognition of Kuntu Zangpo's reality: the innate ignorance that is absence of Knowledge arising with every moment of perception, and conceptual ignorance that locks us into the prison of thoughtforms. Innate ignorance re-initiates the process referred to above in every moment of perception: existential dread, alienation and passion, sustain a vicious circle of constantly reinforced karma. Taking refuge in the alienated ego's thoughtforms, in labelling, structuring and selecting, the view of subject/object duality is accepted as a god-given verity, and external objects are conceived as discrete substantial entities. The fourth text translated herein, the *Garland of Vision* lists the most crass forms of this ignorance under "Mundane Vision." The remainder of the prayer provides the specific modes of vision that facilitate recognition of Kuntu Zangpo's reality within the various psychological environments generated by the five fundamental passions.

The deceptive simplicity of language and concept in the second part of the prayer need not induce the belief that a specious technique

of mind-manipulation is involved. This eminently practicable meditation is essentially contemplation upon the emptiness of the events of daily life. As the Buddha guides us through the various types of mental events, each dominated by a different passion, at each stage he exhorts the yogin to relax and relieve the stress.[143] Thus the Dzokchen precept repeatedly emphasized in this yoga is "Do nothing! Indulge and cultivate nothing! Reject and abandon nothing! Simply be aware and let it be!" To say "Identify the emptiness inherent in simple sensory perception of every situation" would be to cultivate the seeking and striving that precludes attainment. In the first three situations, dominated by desire, hatred and pride, when the yogin stands back, as it were, from the violent or at least highly intense circumstances, detaching himself from the emotionally charged structures that "conceptual ignorance" has woven around him, Kuntu Zangpo expresses the result of this in terms of spontaneously arising Knowledge. In the fourth situation, where jealousy is the dominant passion, the word "Knowledge" is replaced by "ordinary sensory consciousness,"[144] implying the identity of the two meanings. Pure sensory awareness, free of emotional taint and with the full intensity of mindfulness generated by the high-voltage situation, gives access to emptiness, suchness, the here-and-now-ness, of the event, and Knowledge is the cognitive aspect of emptiness. Thus the Buddha is urging us to "do" one thing: to relax and allow Knowledge to assume its rightful primacy. Another way to say it is, "Retrieve the part of mind that has been stolen away by the fascinating or offensive object, severing all attachment to the object, and bringing it back, stuff it into the heart centre—then, No-Mind!"

In each case the villain of the piece is dualizing mind,[145] the unconscious process of differentiating subject and object that arises after the loss of Knowledge. In the realm of the hungry ghosts, desire for an object is the result of the feeling of insecurity and incompleteness that characterizes the split mind. No desire can arise in the plenum of Knowledge because Knowledge is all-encompassing.

There is no distinction between self and other, inside and outside, and empathy is so strong that we "know" our object of desire intimately and fully the moment it enters consciousness. Thus desires are only perfectly consummated through the desirelessness of Knowledge. The Buddha of Wealth, Dzambhala, is the one desireless Buddha named to attract aspirants with temporal ambition still in mind. The end of such a "worldly" yogin's path is the same as that of his brother ascetic married to austerity. Both achieve their every desire through emptiness and its cognitive capacity of Knowledge, which embraces all things and knows all things.

In ignorance, alienated and lonely, we are cut off from the world and other creatures by our belief that we are all separate entities with no connection between us (section seven). Insecure and perplexed, full of doubt and hesitancy, the inner craving for security and certainty becomes transferred to external objects, particularly sexual objects. The more our desire grows the more tormented we become. Our only fulfilment by this route is momentary physical satisfaction. Rebirth as a hungry ghost may be the eventual result of this condition. The Buddha prays that at whatever point we catch ourselves and attain self-recognition in the midst of our desire, we should relax and enjoy the pure sensory consciousness of the moment. Knowledge will then assume its natural primacy. Since sensory discrimination is the starting point and indeed the very condition of our desire, it is the discriminating aspect of awareness that remains as the fruit of recognizing the emptiness of the desire-situation.

Hatred or aversion is a direct function of the split mind (section eight). Again, due to the fear inherent in "island-consciousness," when any event occurs that is not exuding comfort and security, like a dog rolling on its back and wagging its tail, the propensity for hatred can be potentiated. Whenever that initial tremulous vibration of aversion is felt, the primary cause of anger, hatred and violence is active. If conditioning, particularly childhood conditioning, has been such that a shrinking away from a fearful object has become a

hardened propensity, then the tendency to react with aversion will be even stronger. Further, if at any point in life one has been encouraged to express in anger this aversion to an external object, then the conditions for a possible violent confrontation are present.

The Buddha prays that the yogin may catch himself and relax at some point in the progression from the first subtle quiver of aversion to the last blow being struck. If he can, then Knowledge will spontaneously arise and the radiant aspect of awareness will be attained. This radiance is "clarity," or "pellucidity of perception." Here, the "heat" of anger is not at issue: the "cold, blue clarity" of hatred is the quality to be recognized as the "mirror-like wisdom." The mirror itself is the emptiness of mind in which the image appears as illusory gossamer play. The awareness that is like the mirror is the omniscient, omnipresent Knowledge in which the dance occurs and of which the dance is formed. The Protectors of the Dharma are coloured blue-black or red-blue.

Less space in the prayer is given to pride (section nine), jealousy (section ten) and sloth (section eleven). But in a few lines the psychological mechanisms are explained, the karmic result clarified, the injunction to "relax and release the stress in perception" repeated, and finally the wish that all beings perceive the inherent reality of awareness is expressed. Then in the final section (twelve), stressing the illusory nature of the six karmic predicaments, Kuntu Zangpo expresses the wish that all beings attain Buddhahood in order to transform the six types of conditioned being[146] into a dance of awareness. The means by which Buddhahood is to be attained, and the means of provoking the recognition by which the transformation is to be accomplished, is this prayer. This is no contrived priestcraft to increase faith and devotion. It is a statement based upon experiential realization supported by a subtle and profound metaphysics that is magnificent in its clarity and simplicity.

THE WISH-GRANTING PRAYER OF KUNTU ZANGPO[147]

HO! Phenomena and noumena, samsara and nirvana,
The entire universe has one ground,
But alternative paths yield different results—
Displays of either Knowledge or ignorance.
Through this wish-granting prayer of Kuntu Zangpo
May all beings attain consummate perfection and
Buddhahood
In the Palace of the Reality-Continuum.

(2) The universal ground is unconditioned,
An unutterable, self-originating, vast expanse,
Where neither "samsara" nor "nirvana" are known.
Knowledge of this reality is Buddhahood,
While beings ignorant of it wander in samsara.
May all sentient beings of the three realms
Attain Knowledge of the ineffable ground of being.

(3) I, Kuntu Zangpo, also affirm this:
The ground of being is uncaused and unconditioned,
And Knowledge arises spontaneously within it
Free of defiling notions of inside and outside,
Free of boosting affirmation and diminishing negation,
While no trace of unmindfulness veils it:
Thus our self-manifest display is faultless.

In pristine intrinsic knowledge, abiding in stillness,
Though the three realms are destroyed there is no fear,

And there is no attachment to the five sensory qualities.
In self-originating thought-free perception
There is no material form and no five poisons.

As the unobstructed radiant aspect of Knowledge
One substance contains the five aspects of awareness;
As this fivefold awareness evolves
The Five Modes of the Original Buddha emerge;
Thereafter, fully-awakened awareness
Manifests as the Forty-two Buddhas,
And the arising creativity of fivefold awareness
Produces the Sixty Blood-drinking Buddhas:
Thus Knowledge of the ground of being is never
deluded.

Through the utterance of this, my wish-granting prayer,
After all sentient beings of samsara's three realms
Have recognized self-originating Knowledge,
May the scope of awareness reach its optimal degree.

(4) My apparitional emanation an unceasing stream
I project incalculable myriads of forms
Displaying manifold illusion to convert all beings,
Whosoever and whatsoever they may be.
Through this, my compassionate wish-granting prayer,
May all creatures of samsara's three realms
Escape the destinies of the six types of being.

(5) In the first place, deluded sentient beings
Lacked attentiveness and were bewildered
Because Knowledge did not arise in the ground:
This is the primary cause of ignorance and delusion.
There followed a sudden fainting away

Causing feelings of dread and neurotic vacillation;
"I" was alienated from a hostile "other," "the enemy,"
And the mind progressively conditioned by this tendency,
Samsara was established as a way of life.
The five poisons increasing, defilement resulted
And karma, five times poisoned, became an interminable stream.

Since the cause of sentient beings' delusion
Is unmindfulness and absence of Knowledge,
Through this, my wish-granting prayer, the Buddha's aspiration,
May everyone recognize Knowledge spontaneously.

(6) "Innate ignorance"
(Accompanying each moment of perception)
Implies unmindful, distracted cognition,
And "conceptual ignorance"
(Selecting, structuring and labelling)
Implies dualistic cognition.
This twofold ignorance, innate and conceptual,
Forms the basis of all beings' delusion.

Through this, the Buddha's wish-granting prayer,
In all of samsara's sentient beings—
The gloom of their fogged, distracted minds dissolving,
Dualistic perception unified in pellucid clarity—
Let there be spontaneous recognition of Knowledge.

(7) The dualizing intellect is doubtful, fearful and insecure;
It breeds subtle cravings
That gradually crystallize into overt, compulsive desires:

Desire for food, wealth and clothing, home and friends,
For fivefold sensual pleasure and loving companions,
And the tormented yearning of sexual attraction.
All these, the obsessions of temporal, worldly delusion,
The karma of an ego craving objects, are never exhausted.
When the fruit of craving ripens,
Tormented by frustrated desire
There is rebirth as a hungry ghost.
Ah, the misery of hunger and thirst!

Through this, the Buddha's wish-granting prayer,
Neither repressing or rejecting the pangs of frustration
Nor accepting or indulging obsessive lusts,
May all beings possessed by compulsive desires
Be released from the stresses of dualistic perception.
May Knowledge resume its natural primacy
And All-discriminating Awareness be attained.

(8) Confronted by appearances of external objects
There is tremulous vibration of fear in cognition.
When the tendency to aversion crystallizes as hatred,
Enmity breeds violent aggression leading to killing.
When the fruit of hatred ripens,
Ah, the agony of burning and boiling in hell!

Through this, the Buddha's wish-granting prayer,
When aggressive hatred erupts
Neither inhibiting nor indulging it
But relaxing and releasing the stress,
May Knowledge resume its natural primacy.
May all the six types of beings
Attain the Awareness of Radiant Clarity.

(9) When the mind is inflated with confidence,
The intellect scornfully contending with others
Breeds a mind full of arrogant pride,
Creating violent confrontation or war
And all of its consequent suffering.
When the fruit of such karma ripens
A god is born, heir to decay and eventual downfall.

Through this, the Buddha's wish-granting prayer,
May all beings prone to inflated confidence,
At its onset, relax, releasing the stress in perception,
Allowing Knowledge to resume its natural primacy
Attaining the Awareness of Sameness.

(10) The crystallized tendencies of an alienated mind,
Elevating self and diminishing others,
Breed the karma of contention and violent aggression.
This leads to rebirth as a murderous titan
In the anti-gods' realm of constant conflict,
Where downfall into hell is the final outcome.

Through this, the Buddha's wish-granting prayer,
When contention or violent confrontation arises,
May you break the habit of conceiving of others as enemies
And relax, releasing the stress in perception,
Allowing pure sensory consciousness its primacy,
Thus attaining the Awareness of Unhindered Action.

(11) Unmindfulness, apathy and a wandering mind,
Dullness, torpor and forgetfulness,
Languor, laziness and stupidity,
Result in rebirth as a wandering, homeless beast.

Through this, the Buddha's wish-granting prayer,
May the radiance of mindful clarity dawn
In the gloom of sloth and depression
To bring Awareness of a Silent Mind.

(12) Every single sentient being of the three realms
Remains one with me, the Buddha, the universal ground.
Yet unmindful, they are lost in the ground of delusion,
Even now enacting karma that has no purpose.
The six types of karma are all delusory dream,
For I am the Buddha, the Original Buddha.
Transforming the six types of being by emanation,
And through this wish-granting prayer, Kuntu Zangpo's prayer,
May all sentient beings without exception
Attain Buddhahood in the Continuum of Empty Reality.

SECRET INSTRUCTION IN A GARLAND OF VISION

Secret Instruction in a Garland of Vision

by Padma Sambhava

Introduction

Padma Sambhava, the tantric yogin from Orgyen who wandered through Tibet in the second half of the eighth century teaching and practising exorcism, was no great scholar. However, a vast canon of texts was later attributed to him through the device of the treasure-text doctrine, through revelation of scriptures hidden in the elements or in the samadhis that his meditation instruction induced, or by the kindness of the Ḍākinīs of the Orgyen Pure-land. Such texts are called *terma.* The validity of revealed, or treasure, texts is not to be argued, but Treasure-finders (*tertons*) do not claim that Padma Sambhava himself wrote these texts with his own hand. Tibet's Great Guru is also partly responsible for the *kama,* the lineal, oral teaching of the Nyingma School committed to paper. Again, undoubtedly the Guru was a principal link in the transmission of many of these scriptures, but he did not compose them himself. Padma Sambhava, the pandita, is a mythic form of Guru Rimpoche accounted among the Eight Names of the Guru, and as such he is the embodied inspiration of fully-realized adepts of the Nyingma School.

It is difficult to confirm attribution of texts to the historical yogin from Orgyen. It is said that he wrote only four works: a commentary on the Yangdak-tantra on the secret level, a commentary on the *Namo-mañjuśrī-saṅgīti,* instruction on invocation of the Mamo mother goddesses, and the *Garland of Vision.*[148] The last two

titles are scripts of discourses. A fifth work, a commentary upon the *Guhyagarbha-tantra*, is a text of oral instruction delivered by him, but its scribe, Katok Dampa Deshek, lived three hundred years later. The work is said to have been transmitted verbatim by the lineage during those years.[149]

The *Garland of Vision* and the Mamo instruction were given to King Trisong Detsen himself after the King had attained the Dzokchen level, which was at the end of the Guru's period in Tibet. Given the somewhat irregular structure of the *Garland of Vision* text, it is easy to see it as the bones of a discourse taken down in note form, although this is not the orthodox view of it. Rongzom Pandita reports[150] that after singing three songs to the King and the Twenty-five Disciples at Drakmar Tsomo Gur kyi Neuthang,[151] while the disciples rejoiced the Guru composed the two texts and instructed the King in their practice. Perhaps the *Garland of Vision* comprises the notes that the Guru used to instruct the King. Whatever its precise origin, in a highly concise, mnemonic form, the levels of human vision are defined therein. Beginning with mundane vision—which hardly deserves the term "vision" in the case of hedonistic perception, for instance—the Guru dwells briefly on the Buddhist non-tantric levels before treating Dzokchen vision in detail. Thus, despite its unusual form, the *Garland of Vision* is a text describing "the stages of the path" (*lam rim*), a genre of literature more rarely indulged in by the Nyingma than later schools. Furthermore, although the *Garland of Vision* has this academic *lam rim* structure, written from a Dzokchen standpoint its accent is still upon experiential vision rather than philosophical view.[152]

However, the *Garland of Vision* is far more than a sketch of the stages of spiritual maturation according to the Nyingma School's ninefold enumeration. This description applies only to the first half of the work, which may be considered as an introduction to the second and more significant half, which consists of an analysis of the Dzokchen path. The first section, entitled "The Mode of the Great

Perfection" (iiia, p.185), is an analysis of vision. The second section with this head (iiib, p.187) treats meditative vision, while the final section, entitled "Ascetic Practices" (III, p.193), after noting the respective forms of activity of the lower modes treats the Dzokchenpa's activity or conduct. Thus the bulk of the *Garland of Vision* presents secret instruction in Dzokchen vision, meditation and action. However, the terse comment demonstrating the Dzokchen angle on the "lower" eight approaches and the mundane and non-Buddhist philosophies is also a treasury of precept regarding Dzokchen vision: no perspective created by the human mind is outside the scope of the Dzokchenpa's ken or beyond his use as a skilful means in service of the Bodhisattva Vow.

The *Garland of Vision* is well known among Dzokchen initiates. In his short history of the text[153] Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye claims that over the centuries many ordinary yogins gained access to the authentic rendering of the text and many of the wise among them effortlessly attained their goal. It is surprising, then, that only two commentaries upon it are found in the Kama Canon. One of these is from early times and one is quite recent. The first was written by Rongzom Pandita, a great eleventh-century scholar and translator, an incarnation of Vairotsana. Rongzom is known as one of the two "Omniscient" Nyingma scholars (Kunkhyen Longchenpa is the other) and his present relative obscurity demonstrates the dominance of the terma current in later centuries in the Nyingma School.[154] His scholarship was renowned also in India, where he studied before returning to Tibet to work on translation. His clear, fluent commentary[155] on the *Garland of Vision* is dedicated in part to clarification of logical obscurities through reference to mādhyamika metaphysics and basic abhidharma.[156] His approach is through mahāyoga.

The second commentary was written by Jamgon Kongtrul Rimpoche Lodro Thaye (1813–1899), the compiler of the *Rinchen Terdzo* and the principal disciple and scribe of Khyentse Wongpo,

from whom he received the oral transmission of this work.[157] It is a "word-by-word" commentary (*tsikdon*) composed in the style wherein the words of the root text, signified by a symbol beneath them, are woven into the fabric of the commentary, which thus becomes a detailed elaboration of the original. This work is also a model of clarity and simple, succinct prose.

Undoubtedly a translation of Lodro Thaye's work, or a commentary in English elaborating each paragraph with detailed background, is required for a full comprehension of the *Garland of Vision*'s content. Such mnemonic texts as the *Garland of Vision* do assume knowledge of their subject matter, but insofar as the *Garland of Vision* is a metaphysical poem with an inherent mandalic structure, transmitting far more than a body of intellectual knowledge, its principal function here should be as a vehicle for intuitive realization. As the text says, "Absorbing transmission of the root texts of the vehicle of skilful means is to disclose the mandala...and after entering therein, to realize its reality is to attain the supreme power." However, such attainment is only possible if the disciple's mind is prepared, as King Trisong Detsen's mind was prepared, by absorbing Guru Rimpoche's direct transmission. In the paragraph on "Direct and Immediate Realization" the condition for the spontaneous origination of this realization is a falling away of dependence upon the letter of instruction, and rejection of analytical concepts as a source of inspiration. Although we should not hope for the results that can arise from the logical outcome of this parallel, still the principle can be applied. It is beneficial to exercise the intuition on the *Garland of Vision* rather than bring the intellect to bear.

Dzokchen Vision

The *Garland of Vision* first defines starting points on the Dzokchen path, beginning with the most benighted mundane views of reality (section I) and proceeding to the "transcendental" views, the

Nyingma School's nine approaches to Buddhahood (section II). Thus the "garland" of the title is a garland of attitudes, views and visions of the universal fact of being. The word "vision," as used in the translation, embraces all of these vastly differing perspectives on life, although the four "attitudes" in the first, mundane, category of the text, can hardly be considered visions as the word is usually understood. On the contrary, they are perspectives lacking any vision at all. They are ignorant and foolish outlooks where ignorance is "lack of knowledge and awareness"—lack of gnostic knowledge and awareness (*avidyā*). It would be sectarian bigotry to pretend that in practice Christianity and Hinduism are totally lacking in gnostic vision, but in the Dzokchenpa's terms, in theory, where nothing but an uncompromising nondual vision is acceptable, certainly the "views" of the "eternalistic" schools are imperfect, partial visions. Perhaps a case could be made for the vision of *advaita vedānta* being superior to the vision of some hīnayāna schools, but when the concept of "self" (*ātman)* is introduced into any Hindu view, that view is immediately suspect. The text is written from the point of view of the Dzokchenpa's rigorous nondualism, and the Dzokchen "vision" is defined in every statement.

The panditas of ancient India applied the word "view" (*darśana*) to their perspectives of reality, so "view" and "philosophy" became synonymous. Although these "philosophies" evolved into formulations of doctrine, or even bodies of dogma, in the first place the view was derived from a vision shared synchronistically by various yogins and sages meditating in jungle solitude or mountain fastness, and insofar as religions and schools of yoga have their foundation in experiential mysticism, at this original point of departure "vision" is the correct word to use. However, even at the moment of vision, in all but a Dzokchenpa's mind, a process begins that reduces the vision to a mere view, and eventually to dogma. This process is described in the text as the cultivation of any evaluation of reality in the scope between a bloated affirmation giving primacy to existence

and the exaggerated negation of nihilism. Any judgmental evaluation of reality is obscured by the twin veils of emotivity and thought, which clothe naked reality with emotionally-toned analysis. If the Dzokchenpa is defined as the yogin who applies the precept "Relax, and let it be," the yogins of the lesser approaches to nirvana, *moksa* or paradise are those who simply cannot leave it alone, but must strive to alter it, stressing existence or nonexistence, self or no-self, emptiness or form, male or female principle, inside or outside, the creator or creation, and so on. Regardless of the preferred bias, inevitably there arises a mind-created dichotomy that precludes a perfect vision of reality.

A "vision" is a subjective phenomenon inseparable from the viewer. It may be as ephemeral as a bolt of lightning or a glimpse of faerie, or it may be a sustained mental penetration of reality that allows the visionary to write it down in mathematical symbols. Our Miltons and Dantes wrote it down in lyrical poetry. A painter or sculptor may sustain a vision for the duration of his creation of a plastic representation of it; but in this instance the content of the vision is also, partially at least, imagined, where imagination is an interpretive and creative faculty manipulating images. On the contrary, the Dzokchenpa's vision employs an introspective faculty penetrating to the essence, or essences. The visions of both philosopher and poet delve beneath the surface of common dualistic delusion, and in their nature as subjective, unifying vision they partake of the gnostic property of the process, but imagination, whether of an intellectual, metaphysical or artistic nature, always intrudes. Such vision can be described as a modification of reality on a demi-gnostic plane. Thus there are degrees of mental interference, and the less intrusion of imagination and intellect the greater potential for full gnostic penetration of a non-dichotomous reality. The Dzokchenpa's vision is free of all mental activity. When the mind is silent, when imagination, intellect and all thoughtforms are still, the vision of indeterminable space arises, empty space full of lightform.

The nature of vision is light, as all things manifest out of a plenum of clear light. The more profound the vision, the more light dominates the perception, and the less concrete the realm of natural objects becomes, until finally the universe is an ocean of light with the form and shape of things delineated merely by their colour. This light is the "radiance" so often spoken of in the Dzokchen texts, and pertaining to the saṁbhogakāya it is apprehended as "inner light." Its basis is the "clear light," the light of the ground of being, the universal foundation, which is as invisible as its concomitant emptiness: it is the light of the dharmakāya. But since dharmakāya and nirmāṇakāya are two sides of the same coin, it is nothing but the clear light that we perceive in the pure awareness of sensory perception.[158] Thus the Dzokchenpa's vision is pure sensory perception with an innate awareness of the clear light of the dharmakāya.

If Dzokchen vision is the ultimate vision of Buddhahood, the perspective on the highest way of being and on man perfected, then the visions of the lesser approaches to Buddhahood, the partial visions of Christians and Hindus, and even the ignorant outlooks of Marx and Epicurus, the *Little Red Book* and *Playboy Magazine*, are not false or untrue. They are the relative truths applicable to their respective levels of karmic maturity. The Dzokchenpa perceives them as he perceives every intellectual or sensory form that arises into his ken. Without evaluation or discrimination he sees them as emanations of Buddha's Mind manifest for the benefit of those sentient beings for whom they are worthy ideals. For some beings unable to hear the word of a Buddha, the word of Mao Zedong or Hugh Heffner may be the liberating gospel necessary to complete a karmic cycle and reach a level where the Dharma may be heard and understood.

Ultimately, Dzokchen vision is inexpressible. This cannot be stressed too often in case the reader becomes attached to these words as anything but a means to an experiential understanding of ineffable reality. Whatever is said about Dzokchen vision in this and

other texts is designed to clear the yogin's way to attainment of it. Thus it should not be classified with the mundane views of reality held by the hedonist and the nihilist. Their vision is fragmented to the point of belief in separate entities, where the "ego" is a discrete "person" with a consciousness that goes out and apprehends objects "out there," alien objects totally independent of the perceiver. Such ignorance is a "view," a fixed, partial objectification of something that is essentially fluid, mutable, subjective and holistic. Nor can the Dzokchen view be categorized among the transcendental views held by "stream-winners" who still believe that reality has some concrete characteristics and a structure that can be expressed in words. The Buddhist "atomists," for example, although aware of some of the means by which perfect vision can be attained, still see phenomena as independent of the mind that perceives them. Initiates of the Bodhisattva vehicle with all their knowledge of the means of gathering merit through virtuous conduct and meditative techniques, and with maintenance of the crucial Bodhisattva samaya, are obstructed even by this very knowledge insofar as it implies a conception of a path with specific attributes: thus their vehicle is called "the vehicle of specific attributes." Dzokchen vision is a vision with no fixed address, a vision of emptiness. Everything perceived is Dzokchen vision, providing the function of perfect insight penetrates to the essential emptiness.

There is no word in English to cover all the forms and levels of perspective described in the *Garland of Vision*. I have used the word "vision" throughout, and its various contexts adduce the different meanings defined above. There is an advantage in using the word that most frequently describes the Dzokchen perspective to describe ignorant views in that those who lack vision are Buddhas in the making, demonstrating the diversity of the creative potency of emptiness. In the meantime they learn the principles of karmic cause and effect, proving the inevitability of karmic retribution, learning the value of the precious human body and the veracity of

the Four Noble Truths, particularly the First. In the Dzokchen vision there is no difference between Buddhas and sentient beings, between any mental constructs whatever.

Although I do not intend a comprehensive commentary upon the text, there are aspects of the *Garland of Vision* that require elaboration unsuited to footnotes. The remainder of this introduction includes that comment, incorporating extracts from Rongzom Pandita's commentary under relevant heads.

The Lower Tantras (pp.183-4)

Although the accent in *kriyāyoga-tantra* is on externals, the essence of practice is visualization of the deity's mandala and recitation of his mantra. With that in mind we can discuss the peculiarity of *kriyā-tantra*, the preoccupation with ritual.

"Also of vital importance are the yogin's ritual purity, and his knowledge of propitious and ill-omened times and the movement of the planets and stars. A beneficent environment is established thereby, and through the power of synchronistic conjunctions of objects and mental conditions the *kriyā-yogin* attains his goal." (p.184)

This statement from the *Garland of Vision* introduces many of the elements of ritual magic.[159] Ritual magic is a complex subject to discuss, but here it may be defined as application of the interaction between special environmental conditions and controlled mental states. The word "magic" is used here to characterize these effects as forces unrecognized by western science. They are, however, the ABC of ritual efficacy and they are open to the study and understanding of anyone who practices *kriyā-tantra*. Sympathetic and imitative magic are the most common of such functions. This magic is used in ritual practice for many purposes. Its evocative power provides a method of short-circuiting the catch-22 implicit in such paradoxical precepts as "concentrate on emptying your mind." The "resonance" of a highly charged sacred object symbolic

of a thought-free mind received on a pre-verbal level of consciousness may automatically induce a thought-free trance. A "beneficent environment" is crucial here. Timing must be propitious; the psychic environment must be free from the effects of malevolent "planets and stars"—the transpersonal web of karmic causality; and ritual purity is required to preclude interference from obstructing spirits.

The dynamic of the ritual event is devotion. Devotion should not be understood as a mindless abandonment of personal responsibility to an external authority, but rather as an attitude of total receptivity to a level of purity that glows with a feeling-tone of bliss. Since devotion is alloyed with the devotee's sense of sublime humility in the face of something ultimately supreme, the feeling of the ritual is invariably of worship: in *kriyā-tantra* the sādhaka's relation to the deity is as servant to master. On this level ultimate purity is the sacred space in which the ritual artefacts hang, as it were, as concrete manifestations of its attributes, such as skilful means (the dorje), perfect insight (the bell), emptiness (the skull-cup), "aggressive emptiness" (the phurbu), phenomenal illusion (the mirror), and so forth. Sense of time and place are systematized in the sacred sciences of geomancy, astrology, and divination of various kinds. These are examples of methods of understanding, which may at times influence the elements of the field of relativity that must be perfectly ordered to create "synchronistic conjunctions" of forces. When the Dzokchenpa performs this type of ritual he creates a model demonstrating a holistic, unified and interdependent field of emptiness and light that is a function of the yogin's primal awareness.

The tantric kriyā-yogin is also educated in the arts and science of creating yantras and mandalas in ink, coloured powders, paint, three-dimensional structures, and as visualizations in the mind. He learns the alchemical formulae for producing torma (the tantric host) and chomen (pills giving longevity), and the geometrical structures of torma. In the ritual environment nothing is out of place, everything is balanced to perfection, and the yogin sees him-

self serving the Buddhas in the Pure-land of Akaniṣṭha or Orgyen. What in Tibet appeared to the Chinese Marxists as devil-worship was this meticulous preparation of the environment for rituals in which the monk-yogins transformed themselves into gods in Buddhafields. What may appear to the uncompromising Dzokchenpa "purist," who may practise only formless meditation, as idle manipulation of the realm of aesthetic form, is the kriyā-yogin performing his meditation.

In kriyā-yoga the samadhi that is the deity's mood is a function of simulating the deity's form and speech through visualization and mantra, which is where the yogin's effort is directed. In *ubhaya-tantra* equal attention is given to cultivation of body, speech and mind, while in *yoga-tantra* the environment is all but ignored. All attention is applied to the cultivation of the deity's samadhi under the conviction that mind is the leader: if mind is pure, body and speech will automatically be purified. The yogin's samadhi can cut through every hindrance that may arise on the level of ultimate universal sameness. But still, in the outer yoga-tantra the area of attention is the *rūpakāya*, the field of form represented as the body of a god. The rainbow body emanated by the full union of Kuntu Zangpo and Kuntu Zangmo in the dharmakāya is accepted as the natural fruit of samaya, which is to sustain the basic, innate awareness of ultimate perfection as totally indeterminate, neither existing nor not existing.

The Dzokchen Mandala

The text summarily treats creative (*kyerim*) and fulfilment (*dzokrim*) yogas, which are usually subsumed under the headings of the mahāyoga and anuyoga vehicles respectively. Creative meditation is the yoga of constructing a mandala from the deity's seed-syllable mantra by means of visualization. Fulfilment meditation is concerned with detachment from the dance of illusion by creating an

illusory body—the nature of which is emptiness—by using various other advanced meditations. In anuyoga the yogin also learns control of the vital breath and energies of the body. This facilitates control of the mind and its energies. Ultimately it stops the flow of energies from the psychic centres outwards to the gross body, reversing them so that they flow inwards to the psychic centres, into the *lalanā* and *rasanā* channels, and finally into the central channel (*avadhūti*). Both mahāyoga and anuyoga can be considered as preliminary or supportive practices for Dzokchen.

After the creative and fulfilment yogas, atiyoga is treated under the heading "The Mode of the Great Perfection" [section iiia]. However, as Rongzom's commentary states explicitly, the *Garland of Vision* approaches Dzokchen from a mahāyoga standpoint. Thus this first analysis of the Dzokchen Mode applies the pure Dzokchen vision to the mandala of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities as visualized in mahāyoga. The elements of samsara and nirvana that are to be recognized as the Buddhas of the Five Families and their consorts, and the Bodhisattvas, Wrathful Deities and their consorts—the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities—who comprise the mahāyoga mandala, represent those same elements of experience that are to be recognized as already primordially pure in trekcho meditation, Cutting Through. Under the second heading "The Mode of the Great Perfection" [section iiib] the analysis treats the dynamic and the shades of meaning of the yoga of spontaneity, which is embraced by togal, Immediate Crossing.[160] However, the terms trekcho and togal do not appear in the *Garland of Vision*.

The Dzokchen Mandala, then, consists of the elements of experience, as formulated in mahāyāna abhidharma, recognized as primordially pure. By virtue of this recognition, Knowledge-Awareness is informed by the qualities and attributes of the various divine beings that represent the energy and pure awareness inherent in the basic elements of experience. Intrinsic knowledge of the psychophysical constituents, the passions, and so forth, is represented by

the divine forms of a mandala. The elements of each moment of pure perception are visualized as this Dzokchen mandala called the Mandala of Buddha's Body, Speech and Mind.

The symbolism of this mandala encompasses the entire gamut of Buddhist psychology, of epistemology and ontology, and employs a vast range of symbolic representation of deities, their forms, gestures and tokens, as developed in Tantra. Although, as the text emphasizes, the individual deities of the mandala should not be cultivated sequentially in this context, the assumption is apparent that the Dzokchen yogin has practised each of them in a context wherein each deity represents the totality of a single instant of experience. Thus, according to creative yoga instruction, he can visualize the entire entourage in clear, detailed focus. On the other hand, the deities are inseparable from Knowledge and the epistemological attributes of existential awareness that they represent. The visualization is a skilful means of focusing and clarifying the creative efflorescence of Knowledge.

The nature of Knowledge, in its simplicity, is the mind of Kuntu Zangpo. The creative efflorescence of Knowledge is the energy of Kuntu Zangmo. Kuntu Zangpo and Kuntu Zangmo in *yabyum* is the dharmakāya origin of this saṁbhogakāya mandala. The five modes of Knowledge-Awareness are defined by the Buddhas of the Five Families,[161] representing the inherently pure nature of the five psycho-physical constituents[162] that pertain to the subjective aspect of unitary gnostic experience. The Five Buddhas are Akṣobhya (the name and form constituent and mirror-like awareness), Ratnasambhava (the feeling constituent and awareness of sameness), Amitābha (the perception constituent and discriminating awareness), Amoghasiddhi (the conditioned impulse constituent and all-accomplishing awareness), and Vairocana (the consciousness constituent and awareness of the reality-continuum of all-encompassing space); they belong to Vajra, Ratna, Padma, Viśvavajra and Buddha Families, respectively. The

Consorts of the Five Buddhas represent the inherently pure nature of the five great elements, which in their nature as light-seed compose the objective aspect, the Ḍākinīs' web of transforming illusion (*māyā*). The Five Consorts of the Five Buddhas are Locanā (earth), Māmakī (water), Pāṇḍaravāsinī (fire), Tārā (air) and Dhātīśvarī (space), respectively.

Insofar as the inherently pure constituents of the process of sensory perception belong to the manifest dimension of seemingly dualistic factors, they are represented as Bodhisattvas and their Goddess consorts. The "inner" four of the Eight Bodhisattvas (Kṣitigarbha, Vajrapāṇi, Ākāśagarbha and Avalokiteśvara) represent the inherently pure nature of visual, auditory, gustatory and olfactory consciousness, and their Consorts, the Four Beautiful Goddesses (Lāsyā, Gītā, Mālā and Nṛtyā), represent the inherently pure nature of the objects of those consciousnesses (sight, sound, smell and taste). The "outer" four of the Eight Bodhisattvas (Maitreya, Samantabhadra, Sarvanīvaraṇa Viṣkambhina and Mañjuśrī) represent the inherently pure nature of the organs of perception (eye, ear, nose and tongue, respectively). The Consorts of these "outer" Bodhisattvas, four of the Offering Goddesses (Dhūpā, Puṣpā, Ālokā and Gandhā), are the inherently pure nature of thoughts and concepts of the four aspects of time (past, present, future and eternity, respectively). The inherently pure nature of tactile consciousness, the body as the tactile sensory organ, the object of tactile consciousness, and awareness of tactile perception that results from contact of tactile consciousness and object in the physical organ of tactile perception, are four wrathful guardian deities (Yamāntaka, Mahābala, Hayagrīva and Amṛtakuṇḍalī). The consorts of the four wrathful deities (Aṅkuṣa, Pāśā, Śṛṅkhalā and Ghaṇṭā) represent the inherently pure nature of mental concepts of the four extreme ontological views, which are eternalism, nihilism, Brahmanism (the view that propounds a self or ātman) and materialism (the view that there is an external substantial reality).

The Dzokchen Mode (pp.187-193)

As already indicated, the text does not explain explicitly the formal distinction between the first exposition of Dzokchen, which describes the mandala in terms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and the second which treats the fourfold intuitive realization,[163] the components of ultimate accomplishment and the degrees of accomplishment. The interlinear comment in the Tibetan text, interpolated immediately after the second title, is the only clue—the commentaries are also silent. Here it is confirmed that we are now in the ultimate Dzokchen mode of attainment, that the dharma now operative is the spontaneity of Knowledge.[164] This is truly "the resultant approach,"[165] the approach that is so close to final consummation that an assumption of final achievement can be made, allowing the power of conviction to work its own magic and actualize the self-evident potential. This exposition is akin to Immediate Crossing (togal): spontaneity is the dominant characteristic of "the final event."[166]

It may appear that the first three of the four realizations (the Unitary Cause, Sacred Letters, Sustaining Grace and Immediate Realization) are arbitrarily or fortuitously chosen gates to Knowledge out of eighty-four potential skilful methods. Rongzom corrects this error. In the "secret mantra" (*guhyamantra*) approach sacred letters are the principal means of practice and realization, and in the following extract of his commentary treating the Fourfold Intuitive Realization, the relationships of all the elements of the Dzokchen mode of spontaneity are set out in terms of ground, method and result. These three categories should be seen as aspects of the momentary process of spontaneous manifestation of "the final event," a spontaneous manifestation of Body, Speech and Mind in the Dzokchen mode, rather than descriptive of a process through time. But rather than muddying the waters further, here is the Omniscient Rongzom Pandita explicating the spontaneous, effortless Dzokchen mode.[167]

The relationship of the elements of the Dzokchen mode:

The four realizations are the ground; the three components are the means; the four degrees are fruition; and the mode of entry into the mandala of spontaneity is the secret instruction in Immediate Crossing. The One Cause and sacred letters are the ground; sustaining grace is the method; and direct realization is fruition. In the same way, the cognitive component is the ground; the application component is the means; and the fruition component is fruition. Approach is the ground; close approach and accomplishment are the means; and sublime accomplishment is fruition. Likewise, concerning the three stages of access to the mandala: undivided hearing is the ground; entry into the mandala by constant conditioning is the means; and consummation of conditioning, actualization and attainment of the great power is fruition. Thus having reached the bottom of the matter, I will now explicate the meaning of sacred letters a little.

An analysis of the heading "The Mode of the Great Perfection":

As it is said, after completing the two forms of accumulation (virtue and awareness) there is completion, which is the "perfection" of the Great Perfection. Then, since there is no progress along the path and no preparation or application by way of support as there is in the lower vehicles, in the final event Body, Speech and Mind are primordially and spontaneously accomplished, and this feature gives "greatness" to the Great Perfection. In the same way the means of access—the door—is "the mode": thus "The Mode of the Great Perfection."

Comment on the Unitary Cause:

Realization of the one cause is realization of unity. There is no cause or conclusion as in the accomplishment of a birth....

Comment on Sacred Letters:

In the final event Guhyamantra is intuitive realization of Buddhahood, the three sacred letters being the door to complete liberation. In the final event the spontaneity of Body, Speech and Mind is complete liberation. "A" is the door of non-origination; "O" is the door of manifest miraculous illusion; "OM" is the door of nonduality.

Comment on Immediate Realization:

Direct, immediate realization is the direct, immediate power of perfect insight.[168] There is no other immediacy. Further, in the same way that gold is tested by melting, cutting and rubbing, the value of realization should be established. By melting it one discovers whether or not a metal is gold; by cutting it one ascertains whether or not a metal contains gold; and by rubbing it on a black stone one tests the quality of the gold. Accordingly, if one's dharma is in harmony with scriptural transmission, there is, in general, no error in it: this test of dharma is similar to the proof of gold by melting it. In scriptural transmission there is no explanation of the words, and because it is difficult to extract the meaning of the words of a realized mind from the root texts and to understand their meaning, it is only when there is no conflict with the Lama's secret instruction that defects revealed thereby are removed: this test of dharma is similar to the test of gold by cutting it. In the same way, although there may be no conflict with transmission or with the Lama's instruction, still the words may be mere sound, and if no profound experience is transmitted, reliance upon the words of scriptural transmission and instruction should be abandoned altogether in favour of profound confidence and immediate realization, which can be depended upon to remove obscurations and defects: this test of dharma is similar to the test of gold

by rubbing it on a black stone. This immediacy exists coincident with discriminating perfect insight, and when it is actualized through the power of yoga, it is the goal itself.

Rongzom Pandita has defined the four realizations as the ground and the three components (cognition, application and fruition) as the means. But again we cannot strive to practise these three elements: as Shabkar Lama says in *The Flight of the Garuda,* it is the paradox of "concentrating on something quite specific" that is indeterminate. These elements originate spontaneously through transmission or initiatory experience or they do not arise at all. Even the application component must arise spontaneously in a constant stream. The three principles (contingent effect, the imperative and categorical imperative) demonstrate the necessity of the three components. Then the four degrees, two of approach and two of accomplishment, in Rongzom's analysis are the fruition of the three components as skilful means with the intuitive realization and confidence of Knowledge as the ground. The terms "approach" and "accomplishment"[169] belong to mahāyoga, where they are used to describe the entire process of visualization and recitation, and then more specifically to define success in the yoga: "approach" refers to progressive clarity in invocation of the deity, and "accomplishment" to the process of identification with the deity. In Rongzom's explanation[170] assumption of mahāyoga practice is implicit, but it is still clear that in atiyoga there is no progressive development through practice. His analysis of Sublime Accomplishment is more systematic than that of the root text. These are the three groups, or three aspects, of Dzokchen that are spontaneously accomplished: skilful means, perfect insight and bodhicitta; male and female consorts and brother and sister emanations; and emptiness—the door of complete liberation, desirelessness and signlessness.

He then treats the suppression of demon-spirits.

Destruction of the Four Demon-spirits in "Sublime Accomplishment":

In general, each of the various bodies of root texts describes a variant specific method of vanquishing the demons. Here the method involves the four degrees of approach and accomplishment. Accordingly, in "approach" the component of bodhicitta-cognition [or Bodhisattva-cognition] destroys the demon Lord of Death with the samadhi of non-origination; in "close approach" the component of divine self-identification destroys the demon of embodiment with māyā-vision samadhi; in "accomplishment" the component of Female-Consort generation destroys the demon of passion with the atom-free samadhi; and in "sublime accomplishment" the component of means and insight in tandem destroys the divine prince's obstructive distractions with the samadhi that is co-extensive with non-referential space.

Finally, the ultimate accomplishment, the mode of the Great Perfection, is described in terms of its mandala (p.192). This is a mandala quite different from yantras, the symmetrical designs of coloured powder or the three dimensional palaces of the lower vehicles, and no initiation followed by siddhi-generating practice is involved. Shabkar Lama's description in Song Twenty-one is an excellent metaphor for a mandala whose form is the universe, the six senses giving it six dimensions. The "stages of initiation" into this Dzokchen mandala are coincident, but Rongzom Pandita enlarges upon the method as if hearing, contemplation and meditation are serial events. This should not detract from the essential fact that entry and realization are one hundred percent dependent upon the spiritual friend who transmits the root text and the vital initiatory experience.

Constructing the Ultimate Dzokchen Mandala:

Entry [into the Dzokchen Mandala] is achieved by means of

the Three Secrets [OM ĀH HŪNG]. Further, from a spiritual friend who is an unerring exemplar of the mahāyāna, first listen to the reading of the root texts with the perfect insight inherent in hearing, and the mandala is revealed to you. Secondly, intuiting the meaning [of what is heard] through the perfect insight of contemplation you see the mandala and recognize the absolutely specific nature of the divine being. Thirdly, having realized the nature of the mandala through contemplation, accustom yourself to constant realization through the perfect insight of meditation, and entering the mandala you attain initiation and empowerment. Upon entry and actualization you attain the Great Siddhi.

"The Great Assembly of Sacred Letter Wheels" (p.192)

This name, given in Dzokchen to the thirteenth stage of the Bodhisattva's path, is fraught with all the mystique of Tantra. In the mahāyāna, the highest level, which is that of the Buddha and counted as the tenth level, is called "Universal Light," and both names refer to the same reality. In short, the "great assembly of sacred letter wheels" consists of the infinite number of absolutely specific events that constitute the Dzokchen mandala, each event being, and at the same time symbolized by, a "letter" or "compound letter." Rongzom again:[171]

> The level of the great assembly of sacred letter wheels: this is spontaneous accomplishment as a great assembly of experiential mandalas that are the consummation of the two types of form—immaculate form and that of some specific appearance—that define the attributes of the effortless, spontaneously originated mandala of Awareness and Attribute.

But this does not tell us the nature of sacred letters, or even the nature of the alphabet. The meaning of "letters" is one of the deepest

mysteries of Tantra, and a subject that only intuition can elucidate, for the intellect is incapable of analyzing objectively what is at its own root. It is impossible for the eyes to look into the head. Here are some conceptual aids:

> Sacred letters are an analogue of the facets of emptiness, the qualities and functional patterns of primal awareness. In the same way that letters give form to the content of expression, the content of all experience gives form to emptiness. Emptiness is never separate from form, and meaning is never separate from syllables.
>
> Letters are the most rudimentary form of expression, the first level of manifestation out of the dharmakāya. As such, each focal point of creative energy is represented by a letter. This letter represents the facet of emptiness that is manifested in a specific centre.
>
> Insofar as these letters represent the most basic level of manifestation they are themselves nodal points of power and awareness. It is a mistake to conceive of them as mere symbols, or, indeed, even as intensely potent symbols. We are conditioned to treat letters as a convenient graphic mode of expression. In the tantric view the alphabet is not merely a mechanical aid to speech and memory. The sound and the form arise simultaneously, and because the letter is more definite it is more miraculous.
>
> The neologism "gnoseme" has been coined to express the specific wonder and mystery of mystic letters or seed-syllables. The word "gnoseme" could mean "a graphic particle of gnostic awareness," where gnostic awareness is the cognitive function of emptiness. Thus gnosemes are graphic particles, or hologlyphs, of emptiness.

In this Dzokchen context, gnosemes are introduced as an apperceptive mechanism that allows insight into and creates confidence

in the self-existent Dzokchen mandala. Should we expect to see Tibetan or Sanskrit syllables in our focal points of energy, or Latin or Greek, if these languages have sacred meaning? Do we see nothing if we are ignorant of these alphabets? The shape of the letter is ultimately immaterial, merely representational. The wonder, the mystery, the potency and the potential that manifest in increasingly complex, dense and variegated shapes and colours as letters become words, words sentences and sentences strings of meanings defining the three realms, these all residing in the fact of being manifest.

Thus gnosemes are transcendental experiences and they are not to be categorized as rūpakāya phenomena. Words belong to the realm of name and form, gnosemes belong to pure-being (*kāya*). The relative shape of gnosemes indicates conceptual differentiation. As our text informs us, OM indicates the nirmāṇakāya, AH indicates the saṁbhogakāya and HUNG the dharmakāya, and this differentiation may already have misled us into conceiving of these three kāyas as different entities. The pure fact of being of these gnosemes is limited by the distinctions introduced by the various shapes: the crucial nub is the sameness indicated by generic letter, and the distinction is the diaphanous gossamer screen giving the radiance of clear light some definition and specificity.

The Warning (p.193)

Warning of the dangers of Dzokchen practice is usually included in texts of Dzokchen instruction. In the *Garland of Vision* Padma Sambhava's warning is to the preceptor rather than the student: "The preceptor should not initiate the many students who fail in this preliminary work (in the lower vehicles) and prove unworthy." Immature disciples, or disciples without the necessary perspicacity, attempting to practice Dzokchen, even though they are firmly based in practice of the lower vehicles, can become trouble-makers and are likely to form a negative view of dharma in general due to

their failure to obtain the intuitive realizations. This is a very different approach to Dzokchen's dangers from Shabkar Lama's injunction that the yogin beware of the demon that can possess him and turn him into a black magician.

Non-Asceticism (p.195)

It may not be clear from the passage on the "Unsurpassable Asceticism" that the discipline involved in no-discipline is the most rigorous and demanding. Once the yogin has gained some control over the body and mind through discipline of any kind, whether it be football, gymnastics or *kriyā-yoga*, will-power is developed. If the motivation is strong then determination will be equally strong and the human machine will be capable of superior feats of discipline, endurance and accomplishment. Dzokchen is not sought by the hero or the super-achiever, the yogi on his bed of nails, or the Scotts and Shackletons of the mundane world. Whatever level of Dzokchen discipline is considered—physical, ethical or mental—one central precept governs action of body, speech and mind: no indulgence or abstinence, no judgment or evaluation, no cultivation or rejection. This does not mean that the personality will remain the same under Dzokchen discipline, and neither does it mean that it will change. It is an eccentricity to judge and condemn one's own vices, just as it is to cultivate one's virtues: they are to be left alone. Cultivation of virtue is something that has been perfected in the lower approaches to Buddhahood. The preceptor should not give Dzokchen precepts to a student whose accumulation of virtuous qualities is unfinished. In Dzokchen, "Let it be" is the watchword. On the mental level the discipline is the same: the samadhi of universal identity is not attained by mental discrimination of any kind. If a silent mind has been cultivated in another discipline, all the better, but in Dzokchen it is of no greater efficacy than a mind that is constantly chattering. The silent mind is no

closer to Dzokchen accomplishment than the chatterer.

Obviously nothing can be said in terms of conventional discipline—physical, moral or mental—that is relevant to Dzokchen discipline. So here we may have discovered an important indicator: whatever may be said in conventional moral terms has no bearing on Dzokchen conduct. Dzokchen is a nondual discipline, and dualistic analysis is counter-productive. Whenever the temptation arises to posit an antithetical extreme as an antidote to a moral or mental problem, forget it. The middle-way cannot be approached through any form of dichotomy; the middle-way passes through every extreme whatsoever; the middle-way automatically resolves all dualism and polarities; the middle-way is beyond dualistic thought and analysis. Look for the source of the unifying power and you have already failed to find it. Want it, and you have locked yourself in a trap from which desirelessness is the only way out. But desire desirelessness, and the darkness grows deeper. Thinking about it, you are caught in counter-productive dualistic analysis; but ceasing to think about it, you are at the mercy of passionate reaction. So what is the answer? The True Lama and initiatory experience.

Finally, then, we are back to intuitive realization of sustaining grace. As the text stresses, there are many sources of sustaining grace, but through experience the blessing of the Lama is the most accessible, certain and potent. The *Garland of Vision* does not emphasize the role of the Lama, but in *The Flight of the Garuda* Shabkar Lama's explicit remarks and his implications are clear: the Lama is the source of transmission and initiation, and when in doubt take refuge in him.

SECRET INSTRUCTION IN A GARLAND OF VISION:[172]

A SPECIAL CONDENSED MEMORY AID TO VISION AND VEHICLE

Homage to Mañjuśrīkumarabhuta and Vajradharma!

I. MUNDANE VISION

The innumerable errant visions of sentient beings in the mundane sphere are subsumed under four broadly inclusive heads: hedonistic vision, atheistic vision, nihilistic vision and eternalistic vision.

1. The Hedonist

The hedonist fails to realize that all events have a cause and an effect. He is totally confused.

2. The Atheist

Blind to past and future lives, the atheist strives for power and wealth in this single lifetime. He depends upon intrigue.

3. The Nihilist

The nihilist is convinced that there is no causal relationship between events. In his rejectionist view he sees everything that happens to him in this lifetime as adventitiously arisen chance events that vanish into the void. In the end, death is ultimate cessation.

4. The Eternalist

The eternalist filters all events through his creative imagination, perceiving an eternal soul. Variously, eternalists see the soul as having a cause but no effect, an effect but no cause, and a

confused causal relationship. This is all ignorance bereft of any gnostic insight.

II. TRANSCENDENTAL VISION

There are two ways to travel the transcendental path: on the Vehicle of Specific Attributes (the *lakṣaṇayāna*), and on the Adamantine Vehicle (the *vajrayāna*).

A. The Vehicle of Specific Attributes

There are three different approaches taken by the vehicle of specific attributes: the Disciple's approach in the *śrāvakayāna*, the Recluse's approach in the *pratyekabuddhayāna*, and the Bodhisattva's approach in the *bodhisattvayāna*.

(i).[1][173] The Disciple's Vision

The eternalist's vision of an eternal soul and the nihilist's vision of ultimate nothingness, conceived by fixating on the extremes of existence and non-existence respectively, are like someone's mistaken perception of a rope as a snake. In the vision of adherents to the Disciple's approach these extremes are rejected. The Disciple views the atoms of the four elements that comprise the five psycho-physical constituents, the elements of the sensory process and the sense fields, and consciousness as well, as existing absolutely. Contemplating the Four Noble Truths, the Disciple gradually realizes the four aspects of the goal.

(ii).[2] The Recluse's Vision

Adherents of the Recluse's approach agree with the Disciple in his rejection of the eternalist's notion of an eternal soul and the nihilist's notion of ultimate nothingness, and other such concepts derived from extreme positive or negative

interpretations of events. What is specific to the Recluse's vision is his realization of the absence of any substantial essence in just the objective aspect of phenomena, the psycho-physical constituent of form.[174] Further, while striving for his goal of self-illumination, he employs the insights and habits of mind gained in previous meditation experience rather than relying upon a spiritual friend as does the Disciple. Thus equipped, he realizes the true meaning and value of life that underlies events through contemplation of the twelve interdependent elements of the field of relative existence.[175] In this way he attains his goal of self-illumination.

(iii).[3] The Bodhisattva's Vision

In the vision of adherents of the Bodhisattva approach neither passion-defiled experience nor thoroughly purified, immaculate experience has any ultimate existence. On the relative level, insofar as all phenomena are only magical illusion they are also without any specific attributes. Practising the ten transcendental perfections,[176] the Bodhisattva gradually traverses the ten levels leading to accomplishment of unsurpassable enlightenment, which is the goal of his path.

B. The Adamantine Vehicle, the Vajrayāna

There are three approaches in the adamantine vehicle, the vajrayāna: the approach of the ritual-action tantra, *kriyā-tantra*; the approach of mixed ritual-action and internal mind-yoga, called *ubhaya-tantra* or *caryā-tantra*; and the approach of fully internalized yoga, *yoga-tantra*.

(i).[4] Kriyā-tantra Vision

This is the vision of adherents of the ritual-action approach. On the ultimate level the yogin is centred in the space where phenomena neither come into being nor cease to be. On the

relative plane the kriyā-tantra yogin's meditation is concentrated upon visualization of the pure-being of a god's form, the representation of the god's being, his archetypal features, and the recitation of mantra and liturgies. Also of vital importance are the yogin's ritual purity and his knowledge of propitious and ill-omened times and the movement of the planets and stars. A beneficent environment is established thereby, and through the power of synchronistic conjunctions of objects and mental conditions he attains his goal.

(ii).[5] Caryā-tantra Vision

This is the vision of adherents of the dual approach, ubhaya- or caryā-tantra. On the ultimate level the yogin is centred where there is neither birth nor dying. On the relative level, visualizing the pure-being of the god's form, the caryā-tantra yogin attains his goal through meditation involving four degrees of samadhi relying upon synchronistic conjunction of objects and mental conditions. Thus he combines ritual action and mind-yoga.

(iii). Yoga-tantra Vision

The vision of adherents of the mind-yoga approach (yoga-tantra) has two aspects: the outer yoga-tantra of mastery and the inner yoga-tantra of skilful means.

1.[6] Vision in the Tantra of Mastery

This is the vision of initiates into the outer yoga-tantra of mastery. Denying the primacy of the environment, the yogin of the outer yoga-tantra identifies his mindstream with the union of the ultimately unborn and undying god and goddess. In a samadhi of immaculate being he concentrates primarily upon the yoga of creative

visualization of the pure-being of the god's noble form endowed with four seals,[177] and he attains his goal.

2. Vision in the Tantra of Skilful Means

This is the vision of initiates into the inner yoga-tantra of skilful means. This vehicle has three modes: the creative mode, the fulfilment mode and the mode of Dzokchen, the Great Perfection.

(i.) [7] The Creative Mode

In the creative stage with the three degrees of samadhi[178] gradually evolving, the mandala is constructed step by step, and through creative visualization the goal is attained.

(ii.)[8] The Fulfilment Mode

In the fulfilment stage, on the ultimate level, the unborn and undying god and goddess, and the essence of the yogin's silent mind, do not stir from the central channel that is a vast plenum of space, the continuum of reality. On the relative plane the yogin visualizes the pure-being of noble form[179] as radiance, accomplishing his goal by meditating upon unalloyed sameness.

(iiia.)[9] The Mode of the Great Perfection

The Dzokchenpa's meditation begins with intuitive realization of the primal mandala of the Buddha's Body, Speech and Mind, inherent in the indivisible nature of all mundane samsaric events and all transcendental nirvanic events.

The mandala is described in the tantra like this:

The vajra psycho-physical constituents—
Extol them as the five perfected Dhyāni Buddhas;

And the elements of the sensory process and the sense-fields—
In truth these form the Bodhisattva mandala.
Earth is Locanā, water is Māmakī;
Fire is Pāṇḍaravāsinī, air is Tārā,
And space is Dhātīśvarī:
The three realms are immaculate from the beginning.

All experience of the phenomena of samsara and nirvana is ultimately unborn, and since his inherently dynamic, fertile and provocative magical illusion[180] (*māyā*) has as its ultimate nature the Five Sugatas and their Consorts in eternal embrace, the yogin's every experience naturally transcends the pain of samsara. The inherent nature of the five great elements is the Five Buddha Consorts and the inherent nature of the five psycho-physical constituents is the Five Buddhas of the Five Families; the inherent nature of the four forms of consciousness is the Four [Inner] Bodhisattvas and the inherent nature of four objects of consciousness is the Four Beautiful Goddesses; the inherent nature of the four sensory doors is the Four [Outer] Bodhisattvas, and the inherent nature of the four aspects of time is the Four Offering Goddesses; the inherent nature of the body as a sensory organ and the consciousness that attends it, the object of tactile consciousness and the awakened mind that arises from the conjunction of organ, object and consciousness, is the Four Wrathful Deities, and the inherent nature of the four extreme ontological notions is the Four Wrathful Female Deities; the inherent nature of mental consciousness is the awakened mind of the Bodhisattva Dorje Kuntu Zangpo and the inherent nature of all events in samsara and nirvana, both simple and compound, is the Illusionist of the Path, the Female Bodhisattva Kuntu Zangmo. Again, from the

very beginning the inherent nature of all these deities is the manifestly perfected awakened and purified mind of the Ādibuddha, and for this reason these Deities are not to be accomplished sequentially.

Thus nothing of the ten directions, the three aspects of time, the three realms, and so on, all interpreted samsaric experience and all direct nirvanic experience, has any existence apart from mind. As it is said in the scriptures:

The mind differentiated—so many concepts,
These are all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
In actuality the three realms
And the five elements.

All experience of samsara and nirvana is located in the mind;
Mind abides in space; space is indeterminate.

All events are empty by virtue of their empty essence;
All events are immaculately pure in their origin;
All events are all-embracing clear light;
All events transcend suffering spontaneously;
All events are manifestly perfect Buddhahood.

Such is the Great Perfection.

(iiib.) The Mode of the Great Perfection

"Perfection" implies complete and perfect attainment of the karmas of virtue and awareness;[181] and the dharma of spontaneity, which is the result of this completion, is the quality of this mode of being.[182]

The mode of the Great Perfection is a fourfold intuitive realization that progressively quickens profound confidence.

THE FOURFOLD INTUITIVE REALIZATION

The four modes of intuitive realization are intuitive realization of the Unitary Cause; intuitive realization by means of sacred letters; intuitive realization through sustaining grace; and direct and immediate intuitive realization.[183]

1. Intuitive Realization of the Unitary Cause
On the ultimate level all events in samsara and nirvana never come into being, and so have no separate existence. On the relative plane they are illusory figments of mind, so again they have no separate existence. They are unoriginated events appearing in a plethora of magical illusion, which is like the reflection of the moon in water, possessing an inherent acausal dynamic. Since this essentially insubstantial magical illusion also never comes into being, ultimate and relative are identical and their identity is the One Cause. Thus intuitive realization [of Knowledge] arises [with attainment of the unity of the two truths].[184]

2. Intuitive Realization by means of Sacred Letters
All events in samsara and nirvana, unoriginated, are the sacred letter "A," the actuality of Buddha's Speech. The Unoriginated, appearing as magical illusion with an inherent acausal dynamic, is the sacred letter "O," the actuality of Buddha's Body. In the same way, the Knowledge that is the cognitive factor in intuitive realization and the primal awareness without centre or circumference that infuses magical illusion is the sacred letter "OM," the actuality of Buddha's Mind. Intuition of these three sacred letters as Buddha's Body, Speech and Mind is intuitive realization [of Knowledge] by means of sacred letters.

3. Intuitive Realization through Sustaining Grace[185]
Just as red dye saturates white cloth, the power of sustaining grace

infuses acts of adoration and praise. Sustaining grace likewise pervades all events in samsara and nirvana, purifying them and awakening awareness. This blissful power that pervades all things, in addition to the power realized through unitary cause and sacred letters, is sustaining grace. Realization of this is intuitive realization [of Knowledge] attained through sustaining grace.

4. Direct and Immediate Intuitive Realization
Although all events in samsara and nirvana exist from the beginning as pure and awakened being, there must be no conflict [in vision] with either the transmission of the root tantras or the Guru's instruction. Dependence upon the literal letter of instruction and transmission must have dissolved. Then profound confidence gradually arising in the depths of the mind of Knowledge, direct and immediate intuitive realization is attained.

PROGRESSIVE QUICKENING OF CONFIDENCE

The Knowledge that is the essential value and objective of the fourfold intuitive realization is the yogin's path whereon confidence is increased. On this path there is no expectant waiting for the time when a goal is reached as a result of accomplishing a cause. Direct, immediate intuitive realization and confidence arise together spontaneously.

THE THREE COMPONENTS

Three absolutely specific components constitute the ultimate accomplishment. The Knowledge operating as the fourfold intuitive realization is the cognition component, the repetition that inculcates an habitual view is the application component, and actualization through conditioning—by force of habit—is the fruition component.

THE THREE PRINCIPLES

These three specific components of accomplishment (listed above) demonstrate three principles: the cognitive component demonstrates contingent effect; the application component demonstrates the imperative; and the component of fruition demonstrates the categorical imperative.

1. The Contingent Effects of the Cognitive Component
All conceptualization, whether of passion-tainted or utterly immaculate events, is essentially the Buddha's Body, Speech and Mind, an intrinsically purified and awakened field. Intuitive realization of this field of Buddha-nature and intuitive realization of this field as the essential basis of sustaining grace are effects contingent upon the cognitive function. These effects of the cognitive component are the conditions for accomplishing unsurpassable Buddhahood.

2. The Imperative Application, or the Practical Component
All conceptualization, whether of passion-tainted or of utterly immaculate events, conceptualization of the five panaceas or the five nectars, all is one in the ultimate sameness that is pure and awakened from the beginning. In this universal identity there is no partiality, no judgment, no preference for this more than that, and no cultivation of or indulgence in some things and renunciation or rejection of others. This perfect tolerance is the practical component, which is imperative since it is a necessary condition for accomplishing unsurpassable Buddhahood.

3. The Categorically Imperative Fruition Component
All specific conceptualization, such as all passion-tainted and utterly immaculate events, the five panaceas, the five nectars,

and so on, is from the beginning spontaneously accomplished, devoid of indulgence or inhibition, in the space of universal identity. For this reason the wheel of existence is from the beginning spontaneously accomplished as nirvana, the actuality of unsurpassable purity and awakened awareness. Thus the fruition component is Buddha's Body, Speech and Mind manifest as an inexhaustible wheel of manifest ornamentation. This is the categorical imperative.

THE FOUR DEGREES OF PRACTICE

To attain the ultimate fruition the yogin must dedicate himself to the yoga in which the essential reality of *approach*, *close approach*, *accomplishment* and *sublime accomplishment* becomes spontaneously existent.

1. *Approach* is Bodhisattva-perception. When all events are gradually accomplished as the actuality of ultimate purity and awakened awareness, with the aid of allies and supports, authentic intuitive realization is attained.

2. *Close approach* is perception of oneself as the deity. As all events, all phenomena, are from the beginning the actuality of purity and awakened awareness, the yogin himself has the nature of a divine being from the first. This is established by the yogin with the intuitive realization that the deity has no substantial existence.

3. *Accomplishment* is production of the Female Consort. Out of the field of space that is the Great Mother, the Great Mother appears as earth, water, fire and air, and from the beginning it is she who is the dynamic matrix. "Production of the Female Consort" is intuitive realization of this Great Mother.

4. *Sublime Accomplishment* is the conjunction of skilful means and perfect insight. The Five Great Mothers' perfect insight and the emptiness of the feminine space-matrix is conjoined with the Father of the Five Buddhas of the five psycho-physical constituents: they have formed an ineluctable union from the beginning. This conjunction produces brother and sister Bodhisattva emanations, whose actuality is mind pure and awakened from the beginning: an illusion dancing with an illusion in a scenario of magical illusion. The blissful situation wherein this illusion of Supreme Pleasure[186] arises, is a reality devoid of marks and signs, co-extensive with non-referential space. When this has become a continuum, there is spontaneous accomplishment. Thus the four demon-spirits[187] are vanquished and the ultimate goal attained.

THE SPONTANEOUS DZOKCHEN MANDALA

Since all events are immaculate from the beginning, every experience of samsara and nirvana is an immeasurable wish-fulfilling palace, a wheel of limitless dimension. This is the Buddha's primal, unsurpassable mandala. To disclose the mandala is to absorb transmission of the root texts of the vehicle of skilful means (*anuttarayoga-tantra*). To see the mandala is intuitive realization of its nature. To enter the mandala is to gain a constant, habitual realization of its nature. To attain the supreme power is to realize its reality after entering therein. By this mode the ultimate reality of the Great Perfection is attained.

SPONTANEOUS ARRIVAL AT THE LEVEL OF THE GREAT ASSEMBLY OF SACRED LETTER WHEELS[188]

Highly intelligent people understanding the meaning of "originally pure and awakened from the beginning" as originally pure

and awakened from the beginning reject the regular course of study and practice because effective conditioning of the mind in the way of the Buddhas is a long and slow process. Common minds listening to the secret teaching, regardless of how they interpret its substance, cannot reach true and profound confidence. Ordinary devotional minds with weak comprehension fail to perceive the true and profound in the teaching, and after experiencing delusory phenomena in their meditation they believe that other practitioners have experiences similar to their own. They then curse others as liars, reviling superior beings. Adopting disputatious attitudes they insist upon a more secret vehicle to obtain the ultimate secret. Since there are so many obstacles to spontaneous recognition, until the intellect has evolved that can intuitively understand the meaning of "pure and awakened from the beginning" *as* pure and awakened from the beginning, the preceptor should exhaustively teach the student the defects of samsara, the qualities of nirvana, and skill in the techniques of every lower approach to Buddhahood, even though the disciple's eventual goal is to go beyond the lower methods. The preceptor should not initiate the many students who fail in this preliminary work and prove unworthy.

III. ASCETIC PRACTICES

There is a great diversity of specific ascetic and purificatory practices associated with the various visions. The hedonist and the nihilist have no ascetic practices, but there are four types of asceticism practised by those who value self-abnegation: the materialists' and the eternalists' mundane asceticism, the Disciple's asceticism, the Bodhisattva's asceticism and the Unsurpassable Asceticism of the Dzokchenpa.

1. The Hedonist

The hedonist does not practise asceticism because he is confused

about cause and effect.

2. The Nihilist
The nihilist has no ascetic practice because of his nihilist views.

3. The Materialist
The materialist practises ritual purity and other such mundane ascetic practices in order to attain specific advantages in this life.

4. The Eternalist
The Eternalist practises false purificatory techniques, such as the ascetic rite in which five fires[189] are believed to purify the body, and similar methods, with the intention of purifying the everlasting soul.

5. The Disciple
As it is said in the *Vinaya*:

> *Commit no sin whatsoever;*
> *Exercise every excellent virtue;*
> *Thoroughly train your own mind:*
> *This is the Buddha's doctrine.*

The Disciple believes that all virtuous and vicious events exist independently, as either relative or ultimate entities, so he practices physical disciplines and ascetic techniques to cultivate virtue and eradicate vice.

6. The Bodhisattva
It is said in the *Byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa*:

> *Do not act pragmatically*
> *And do not project threatening illusions;*
> *Since it is compassionate and loving*
> *There is no fault in a healthy mind.*

When the yogin is governed by transcendent compassion nothing he does, be it virtuous or unvirtuous, will impair his vow. The Bodhisattva's vow, in brief, is to act from the base of transcendent compassion.

7. The Dzokchenpa
The Unsurpassable Ascetism: it is said in the *Dam tshig chen po'i mdo*:

> *When the yogin has realized the superior method of the Buddhas,*
> *Even though he indulges constantly in the five passions and sense pleasures*
> *He remains uncontaminated, like a lotus growing, unsullied, in a swamp:*
> *Here is the most excellent discipline.*

Since all events in samsara and nirvana are ultimately identical, there is no need to cultivate compassion or to reject anger. Similarly, if the mind is merely silent, compassionate responsiveness will not necessarily arise. Depending upon what arises—mental chatter pure from the beginning or a silent mind pure from the beginning—then either ascetic discipline or purificatory transformation is practised, and action is either immaculate or impure.

> *This secret garland of vision*
> *Is like the gift of sight to a blind man.*
> *If a superior being with skill in wisdom and means exists,*
> *May you meet him.*

Thus *Secret Instruction in a Garland of Vision* is completed.

Notes

Introduction

I. The Theory and Practice of Dzokchen

1. The introduction is divided into sections under the principal heads of Starting Point, Path and Goal, a traditional structure of analysis of any vehicle to Buddhahood. The material under these heads is designed to provide a kaleidoscopic perspective of Dzokchen.
2. "Lama" is used throughout in the traditional sense of preceptor and exemplar of the Buddha's path, rather than in the journalistic sense of Tibetan Buddhist monk.
3. There is no single Tibetan word from which the notion of "simplicity" is derived. *rNam dag*, usually translated herein as "immaculate," literally "quite pure," is a way of describing the same reality. The adjective *gdod ma'i*, "from the beginning," "primordial," strengthens the sense of purity that is the root of simplicity. *So ma*, "pristine," is another synonym. But what the Lama was indicating here was the nature of the dharmakāya—emptiness and gnostic awareness.
4. *rDzogs pa chen po*, contracted to *rdzogs chen* and pronounced "dzok-chen," *mahāsandhi* in Sanskrit, has the sense of "completion" in its perfection. Thus the word "holistic" is germane to its definition, and Dzokchen could be translated "The Magnificent Holistic Perfection."
5. Gnosis, and gnostic awareness, are employed throughout this work in the general dictionary sense of "mystical awareness," an awareness that in this Buddhist context can only be *ye shes* (*jñāna*), holistic awareness of transforming illusion (*sgyu ma*, *māyā*). Further, the word has happy connotations of western Christian sects such as the Albigensians, who could be considered Christian tantrikas.
6. See Glossary of Sanskrit Terms.
7. *Bya bral* and *dmigs med*: non-action and aimlessness describe the condition of the Dzokchenpa when spontaneity and synchronicity

have replaced contrived activity and ambition.

8. If the Nyingma School's nine approaches to Buddhahood are conceived as a pyramidal hierarchy, then Dzokchen is the apex, where spatiality and temporality vanish into vast space (or the "cosmic egg"), a realm of pure potential (*skyes med*). Even the most outspoken ideology of equality and democracy—Marxism—in an age of anti-hierarchical dogma demonstrates in practice that the archetypal hierarchical mould of mind cannot be recast by political means. Dzokchen at the apex of the spiritual hierarchy is the only means of transcendence of the hierarchy, as the zero inhabits every integer and the point lies all along every line: in Dzokchen this is the only equality and democracy.
9. *Byin brlab, adhisthana*: see *Garland of Vision*, p.188.
10. *Phyag rgya chen po, mahāmudrā*: the differences between Dzokchen and Chakchen as goals form an interesting topic for intellectual discussion, but no distinction has any practical relevance to the Dzokchenpa or Chakchenpa. Their techniques and terminology differ, but so do the techniques and language of subsects of each school. To all intents and purposes Dzokchen and Chakchen can be bracketed together.
11. See *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Seventeen.
12. See *In Exile from the Land of Snows* by John Avedon for a factual and highly readable account of Tibet's downfall.
13. *Ma rig pa, avidyā*: literally "the absence of *rig pa*."
14. *Thar pa, mokṣa/mukti*: the Hindus employ the same word for liberation as the Buddhists, and although their conception of it differs in some radical points—and these concepts are obstacles to its attainment—experientially nirvana is still nirvana.
15. *sGrib gnyis*: *nyon mongs pa'i sgrib pa* and *shes bya'i sgrib pa*, the veils of passion and mental concept.
16. See Glossary of Numeral Terms.
17. Desire is eradicated in the hīnayāna, neutralized in the mahāyāna and intensified in the vajrayāna (see *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Thirteen).
18. See note 3.
19. But see *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Six.
20. The definition of emptiness is disputed between the *Rang stong pa* who define the Buddha-nature as utterly empty in itself and the

gZhan stong pa who define it as empty of extraneous defilements. Dzokchen, following the latter line, finds emptiness within and inseparable from appearances.

21. *bLo ldog rnam pa bzhi*: the "four mind-benders" provide discursive contemplation upon (1) *mi lus rin po che*, the good fortune of a precious human birth; (2) *mi rtag pa*, the lessons of universal transience; (3) *las rgyu 'bras*, the laws of karma; and (4) the inevitability of karmic retribution.
22. See *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Thirteen.
23. Two Dzokchen terms imply this essential recognition: *ngo sprod pa* means "to be introduced to," "to be initiated into" and by extension "to recognize the nature of the mind"; while *rang ngo shes pa* means "to recognize or understand ones own nature."
24. See *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Sixteen.
25. *Ru bzhi*. See *Khrid Ye shes bla ma*.
26. The terms "vertical" and "horizontal" applied to patterns of causation must be apprehended intuitively. To use the metaphor of the mandala, "vertical effusion" is the acausal manifestation of the circumference out of the centre, the emanation of the holistic universe out of the universal ground; and "horizontal causation" indicates the causal relationship between events in linear time and space.
27. See *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Sixteen.
28. *lTa ba, sgom pa, spyod pa, 'bras bu*.
29. Not "A" nor "not-A" nor "both A and not-A" nor "neither A nor not-A."
30. *sPros bral*, free of conceptual limitations and interpretive projections, free of all restrictions to a single meaning and incapable of elaboration.
31. See *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Sixteen.
32. *Asana*, the third leg of Patanjali's *aṣṭāṅgayoga*.
33. See Glossary of Numeral Terms.
34. *Phur bu, kīla; katvaṅga*.
35. *'Gegs* is the substantive derived from the verb *'gegs pa*, "hindering," "obstructing."
36. *bLa mtsho*: the sacred lakes whose waters are the "spirit" of Tibet and its people. *bLa*, life-spirit, and *ma*, the feminine definite article, are the two constituent syllables of *bla ma* (Lama); *bLa* is a pre-Buddhist, Bon, conception.

37. *rDo rje gya tam, viśvavajra.*
38. See Glossary of Numeral Terms.
39. *Lhag mthong, vipaśyanā.* The technique alluded to here is described in *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Fourteen.
40. *gCod*: see *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Seventeen.
41. *bDud bzhi, catturmāra: phung po'i bdud, skandhamāra; nyon mongs kyi bdud, kleśamāra; lha'i bu kyi bdud, devaputramāra; chos rgyal gyi bdud, mṛtyamāra.* The four demon-spirits are the powers of embodiment, emotional passion, divine pride, and death.
42. *Srog rlung*: this is not to be identified with sexual energy alone. At the base of the spine, at the lower end of the central channel, is the sexual cakra, the fifth in the fivefold system and although sexual energy is its primary manifestation it is the far greater life-force that in its increasingly more subtle and sublimated energy forms vitalizes the entire being.
43. *rDo rje myal ba: vajranaraka.* Since no conditioned state is eternal, the everlasting nature of the vajra hell exists as a conviction in the minds of its denizens. But the illusion of eternity feels like eternity itself.

II. THE LANGUAGE OF DZOKCHEN

44. See *Garland of Vision*, pp.181–2.
45. *bLa med rnal 'byor rgyud, anuttarayoga-tantra.*
46. See *The Royal Song of Saraha*, H.V. Guenther, and *Buddhist Scriptures*, "From Saraha's Treasury of Songs," trans. David Snellgrove.
47. *gNyis-med, advaita.*
48. *Zung du 'jug pa, yuganaddha.*
49. *dByings, dhātu.*
50. *Rig pa*: the Sanskrit equivalent *vidyā* is used nowhere in Sanskrit texts with the sense of *rig pa*. *Rig pa* is sometimes translated as "pure presence" or "intrinsic awareness."
51. *Ye shes, jñāna*: the prefix *ye* means "ultimate," "original," "first," and *shes pa* means "cognition," hence "original or pure awareness," "ultimate cognition."
52. *Rig pa ye shes (rig pa'i ye shes).*
53. *gSal ba, prabhava.*

54. *Ngo bo, rang bzhin, thugs rje.*
55. *Kun khyab.*
56. *Byams pa, maitri.*

EMPTYING THE DEPTHS OF HELL

57. *mChog sprul sku rnam gsum.* The first of the Three Supreme Emanations was Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192); the second was Guru Chos dbang (1212–1270); and the third rGod ldem can (1337–1409) (see p.139). For short biographies of these tertons and information about other Nyingma lineage holders see Dudjom Rimpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History.*
58. *mTshan ldan mkha' 'gro ma rnam gnyis dang po.*
59. Grwa pa mngon shes (1012–1090) of mChims, attached to bSam yas chos 'khor, was the great *gter ston* who discovered the four volumes of medical tantra, the *rGyud bzhi*. He was a Guru of Ma cig Lab sgron, amongst others.
60. *Rig pa rtsal dbang*, the first and last empowerment into the essence of Dzokchen.
61. The *Padma bKa' thang* prophecy states that "the treasure of gNam skas (and) mKhar chu will be revealed" by Guru Chowong. In the lCags phur (Iron Phurba) Cave of mKhar chu, just over the Tibetan border north of Bum thang in Bhutan, Guru Chowong discovered a major cache.
62. *bKa' brgyad bsang ba yongs rdzogs* and the *'Khor ba dong sprugs*, which includes the *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung ba'i zhi khro narag skong bzhags gyi cho ga.*
63. *Nyams chag sdig sgrib thams cad bshags pa'i rgyal po na rag dong sprugs* is the full title.
64. *Guhyamantra*: "secret mantra" language has the power of manifesting its actuality when recited under optimal conditions. This text provides a fine example of mantric language, its meaning realized spontaneously and automatically when repeated by the sādhaka with devotion and attention.
65. *rTsa ba'i dam tshig dang dam tshig yan lag nyi shu tsa lnga.*
66. The Tibetan verb applied to this process is *sgrol ba*, at once "to

release" and "to kill."

67. See *The Flight of the Garuda*, Song Seventeen.
68. "Point instant" is a synonym of "vast expanse," *klong*, used here in preference to its more vague and yet more literal equivalent to indicate the personal, immediate, existential, nature of the confession.
69. *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung ba'i zhi khro narag skong bzhags gyi cho ga.*
70. The *Ādibuddha*. Sometimes contracted to Kunzang.
71. *gYung drung*: the swastika, right- and left-handed, symbolizes immortality and indestructibility.
72. *Bha ga, yum gyi mkha'*: the sky is a euphemism for the vagina in Tantra; they share a lack of fixed dimension.

THE FLIGHT OF THE GARUDA

73. The voluminous *Zhabs dkar rnam thar* is a popular masterpiece of autobiography, a source of inspiration for every Eastern Tibetan Dzokchenpa. The first volume was written by Shabkar Lama himself, the smaller second volume was partially written by a disciple.
74. A mdo Reb dgongs or Reb kong, also known as gSer smug ljongs, is located in mDo smad A mdo province to the north-east of the Machen Pomra range.
75. *bLa brang bkra shis dkyil*, a large monastery in north-east Amdo, now Gansu Province. It largely survived the Red Guards only to be gutted by fire in 1985.
76. Chos kyi rgyal po Ngag kyi dbang po's Lama was the terton bDe chen rgyal po of sNye mo Ka rag, whose own terma (*gter ma*), the *rTa 'grin phag mo ye shes nor bu*, was transmitted to Shabkar by the Lama O rgyan bstan 'dzin.
77. The terton bDe chen rgyal po's terma, *rTa 'grin dang phag mo ye shes nor bu*, was Shabkar's complete manual of practice. It was transmitted to him by an intermediary Lama called O rgyan bstan 'dzin.
78. See Glossary of Sanskrit Terms.
79. *gNas lugs.*
80. *gNas 'gyu rig gsum*: this is a vital Dzokchen precept, one that can be given as the sole meditative support to Dzokchen practice. See Songs Fifteen, Eighteen and note 112.

81. In the Tibetan legend of the origin of Rudra, it was this same error that gave birth to the Lord of Demons. Rudra is the Tibetan vision of the Hindu Mahādeva, based in undeniable metaphysics rather than in experiential practice.
82. In the *Yid bzhin rin po che mdzod*, Longchenpa reduces to absurdity the notion that mountains, for instance, are merely figments of the mind. He distinguishes clearly between our perception of the mountain, which is like a dream, an hallucination, the reflection of the moon in water, etc., and the mountain "out there," about which he is silent. Nowhere does Shabkar make this distinction. The reason is that it is irrelevant to the yogin, who at this stage in his progress must be absolutely convinced that all phenomena, such as the shape and colour arising in his visual sense field, are creations of his mind. It is useful to bear in mind Saraha's mahāmudrā assertion that no concept is valid but that its efficacy in its own context makes it so. In this context the concept of all things as mind is a sharp-edged sword to destroy attachment to phenomena.
83. *Chos thams cad mnyam pa nyid du rdzogs pas: mnyam pa nyid* (*samatā*), literally, sameness, is synonymous with *chos nyid* (*dharmatā*) and *stong pa nyid*, (*śūnyatā*).
84. *Rang rig pa'i ye shes.*
85. *Lam rim ye shes snying po* of bDe chen chos rgyal gling pa, pp.204–5. Compare the song of Ye shes mtsho rgyal in *Sky Dancer*, pp.45–47.
86. *'Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i khregs chod lta ba'i glu dbyangs sa lam ma lus myur du bgrod pa'i rtsal ldan mkha' lding gshog rlabs.*
87. See p.87 for identification of Shabkar Lama's principal teachers.
88. Titles to the Songs have been added by the translator to facilitate reference to the content.
89. *Sa* (*bcu*) *dang lam* (*lnga*): the ten levels of the Bodhisattva path and the five stages of the path to realization. As a vehicle, Dzokchen is defined as neither sudden nor gradual in its approach to Buddhahood. *Khregs chod* is a more gradual approach than *thod rgal*.
90. Tibetans point to the heart as the seat of the mind; Occidentals point to the brain.
91. *Sems nyid, cittatā*: in the previous verses the object of examination was mind (*sems*). Now the object is the nature of mind or mind in

itself (*sems nyid*), but since our examination has established that mind and its nature are identical the distinction between *sems* and *sems nyid* is academic.

92. *gZhi yi sems nyid gnas lugs kyi rang bzhin gtan la phab pa'i ngo sprod do*. This is an introduction to our original nature by way of mind: the nature of mind is our original nature. See Song Six. The list of synonyms of "I" at the beginning of Song Six mix epistemological with ontological terms.

93. *sKu dang ye shes*: this pure-land mandala is a field of infinitesimal mandalas of light (*thig le*), light-seeds, emanating from the heart of Kuntu Zangpo.

94. The *Theg mchog mdzod* and the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin phung* are the two texts mentioned here. But the first chapter of the early work of Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin rin po che mdzod*, treats the origination of samsara in detail. See also *The Wish-Granting Prayer of Kuntu Zangpo*, p.148.

95. *Nga*; *bdag* (*ātman*); *gang zag bdag med*; *sems* (*citta*); *shes rab pha rol tu phyin pa* (*prajñāpāramitā*); *bde gshegs snying po* (*sugatagarbha*); *phyag rgya chen po* (*mahāmudrā*); *dbu ma* (*madhya*); *thig le nyag gcig*; *chos kyi dbyings* (*dharmadhātu*); *kun gzhi* (*ālaya*); *tha mal shes pa*.

96. *Rig pa*.

97. *dNgos gzhi'i gnas lugs do*: discursive examination of mind constitutes preparatory practice in *khregs chod* and direct realization of our existential condition (*gnas lugs*) is the main practice.

98. *sKu* (*kāya*).

99. *Rig pa'i rtsal*. See Song Twenty-Two.

100. The three human Buddhas of past, present and future are Dipankara Buddha, Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Buddha. Here the 108 wrathful and peaceful deities are implied: see *The Prayer of Kuntu Zangpo*, p.149.

101. *Rang snang*: this difficult concept is best understood by identifying with the all-pervading cognitive principle (*rig pa*) and then conceiving one's own body and the environment as a holistic Gestalt, or hologram, projected within it.

102. *gZhan 'phrul dbang byed lha*.

103. Shabkar Lama uses the term *phyi rol mu stegs*, which applies only to Hindu yogins. Although the Naths are probably most renowned for such miraculous practices, many stories exist of Buddhist siddhas' achievements of this kind. In particular see Lwawapa's siddhi in *Masters of Mahamudra*, p.179.

104. *Thod rgal*: see p.81.

105. *rNam rtog*, *vitarka*, is the process of thought, and *rtog pa*, *vicara*, are the concepts underlying thought. These two terms describe the mental veil that conceals Knowledge.

106. *Lhun gyis grub pa'i dgongs pa*: this is the dynamic of *thod rgal*, the fruit of *thregs chod* practice, and the final level of *atiyoga*.

107. In Song Seven.

108. *dKyil 'khor*: in Dzokchen "mandala" has a special signification. Since the atiyoga Dzokchen mandala has no centre or circumference, rather than signifying a symmetrical *yantra*, it indicates the "patterning" of the formal Gestalt of the nirmāṇakāya level. This patterning is the asymmetrical patterning of nature, the perfect asymmetry of a tree or the asymmetry of the structure of a complex molecule, for instance. See also *Garland of Vision*, pp.185–6, for the mahāyoga Dzokchen mandala.

109. In this verse first mention is made of the apogee of Dzokchen attainment—the Rainbow Body (*'ja' lus*). Thus "the end of the path" (*mthar thug*) implies what appears to be death to deluded observers, but what in reality is a dissolution of the individuated dharmakāya, which manifests as the rūpakāya in the universal ground of being, and into the dharmakāya that is synonymous with the ground of being. The macrocosmic chalice and elixir manifest for the sake of all beings out of the ground of being.

110. *rTsal byong*.

111. "Adornment" does not imply that mental quiescence is merely a secondary, decorative state of mind, but rather that it is an immaculate mode of mentality, and is, therefore, like a rare jewel.

112. *gNas 'gyu rig gsum*: this phrase indicates the important Dzokchen precept devised to accelerate the process of integrating one's experience of the active and the contemplative modes into the continuity of consciousness with equal value in every sense. Cultivation of this aspect of nondual meditation removes the Buddhist bias towards the contemplative mode, which defines meditation as formal sitting meditation, and the dangerous assertion that a quiescent mind is inherently superior to a dynamic state. See Song Eighteen.

113. *gLu dbyangs snyan mo*: Sarasvati, the Bodhisattva Goddess of

Learning, Music, and Poetry, and Consort of Mañjuśrī.

114. *Theg pa'i yang rtse*: if the nine approaches to Buddhahood, beginning with the śrāvakayāna, are conceived in a pyramidal hierarchy, then the non-temporal, non-spatial apex of the pyramid is Dzokchen.

115. At this stage reflexive recognition of the nature of mind has become a habit. Examination of the mind is now an obstacle to the spontaneous arising of Knowledge. No-meditation indicates a state where even the notions of meditation and meditator are absent, free of both meditation and non-meditation when both states are self-conscious. This double negative has the same meaning as Nāropa's mahāmudrā statement of simple negation, the oft-quoted lines:

Without thought, deliberation or analysis,
Without meditation and without action,
Without doubt or expectation,
Mental constructs and dualities spontaneously dissolve
And the original face of reality shines forth.

The mendicant pilgrim is best placed to recognize anonymous, unlearned (or learned) realized beings whose attainment has arisen in spontaneous no-meditation.

116. *Go ldog 'gros*: the paradox of discovering immutable samadhi in relaxed, carefree, no-action—framed in the previous verse—is restated in this verse as the paradox of no-meditation as sustained meditation.

117. *Bya bral*: this is an epithet with significant outer and inner meanings. As an epithet it means "a religious mendicant without any responsibilities," a "vagrant" or "wastrel." The outer meaning is "duty-free," "workless"; while the inner meaning is "non-action," the achievement of spontaneous, acausal action.

118. *rDzogs chen snying thig*: besides referring to a category of lineages, foremost amongst them the kLong chen snying thig, a tradition established by the thirteenth century yogin and sage kLong chen rab 'byams pa (Longchenpa), who fused the *gter ma* and *bka' ma* teaching into a unitary, systematized corpus of theory and practice. The term indicates a metaphysical reality, the all-encompassing *bindu* at the heart centre, the *thig le nyag gcig*, the Cosmic Seed.

119. *Khregs chod*.

120. See Songs Three, Eight, Nine and Thirteen.

121. *Thig le, bindu*. The same term is used in the following verse.

122. The same exorcising seed-mantra is employed in the *Tshig gsum gnad brdegs* (Garab Dorje's *The Three Incisive Precepts*) meditation. It creates a state of shock that empties the mind and allows the space for recognition of mind's original face to arise.

123. This practice is classed as an "internal, extraordinary preliminary practice" in Dzokchen. It is one of the *ru bzhi*.

124. See the second part of Song Seven for an identification of the Five Dhyāni Buddhas.

125. Red and white are the colours of female and male, solar and lunar energies, the blending of which give rise to the mandala.

126. *Rig pa gcer mthong gi ngo sprod; mDzod bdun; Shing rta gsum; rDzogs chen rgyab chos nam mkha' skor gsum: Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin phung; rDzogs chen mkha' 'gro snying thig; Sangs rgyas lag bcangs.*

127. In the principal Dzokchen lineage Śrī Siṃha was a significant link in the chain of Guru-disciple relationships that brought the dharma to Tibet. He was the disciple of Mañjuśrīmitra and the Guru of Vimalamitra and Jñānasūtra. It is probable that Śrī Siṃha's residence, So-khyam, was in Central Asia.

THE WISH-GRANTING PRAYER OF KUNTU ZANGPO

128. *Byang gter*.

129. *Khyung, Garuda*: see p.68.

130. *mChog sprul sku rnam gsum*. See note 57.

131. rGyang Yon po lung was a major place of terma concealment (*gter gnas*) in its own right. The cave still exists today in a small grassy valley opposite the Yang 'dul temple and close to the great Bumpa of rGyang near Lhatse Dzong in Tsang.

132. *mDzod lnga*: *Vajrakila, las rgyu 'bras, bsnyen sgrub, rten 'grel, bGegs thal bar rlog pa'i chos*, and *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal* were the five categories.

133. Thub bstan rdo rje brag lies on the north bank of the Tsangpo River between the confluence with the Kyichu and Samye Chokhor.

134. *rDzogs pa chen po Kun tu bzang po dgongs pa'i zang thal du bstan pa'i rgyud* is the principal text of the cycle of texts contained in this volume of gter ma.

135. *Zang thal*: there is no known Sanskrit equivalent to this term, the etymology of which is unclear. In contrast to *pho ba*, which is often translated as "transference," zang thal implies a pre-existent existential base at the location to which the transference shifts full awareness.
136. *sMon lam stobs po che.*
137. *sMon lam*: literally, "path of good wishes."
138. *sMon lam brgyud.*
139. *Thugs, gsung, sku, 'phrin las, yon tan*: otherwise, Mind, Speech, Body, Activity and Quality.
140. The versification and verse or part numbers are the translator's interpolation.
141. *Kun gzhi.*
142. *Rig pa'i gsal ba.*
143. This stress refers to the gross tension of competitive and demanding life-styles, but it also indicates the subtle stresses that accompany dualistic vision, varieties of which are listed verse by verse in *Emptying the Depths of Hell*, pp.59–61.
144. *Shes pa*, or *lta da she pa*: consciousness of the here and now, which means non-referential Awareness (*dmigs med ye shes*).
145. *gNyis 'dzin blo* or *gnyis 'dzin btas pa'i bag chags.*
146. See Glossary of Numeral Terms.
147. *Kun bzang smon lam.*

SECRET INSTRUCTION IN A GARLAND OF VISION

148. *Yang dag gsang 'grel*; *'Jam dpal mtshan mdzod*; *Ma mo rgyud 'grel*; *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba.*
149. *rTsa rgyud gsang ba snying po'i 'grel ba nyi ma'i snying po zhes bya ba gu ru padma rgyal po'i gsungs rgyun man ngag snyen brgyud chos rje ka thog pa chen po'i bshad srol bzhugs so.*
150. *lTa phreng Rong zom*, p.176, ff.50b. See note 155.
151. Brag dmar mtsho mo mgur kyi Ne'u thang: Brag dmar probably refers to the valley above Samye.
152. For a more philosophical and less practically oriented Nyingma *lam rim*, or philosophical perspective, of the various Buddhist schools, see Mi pham Rimpoche's *Grub mtha' sdus ba*, translated into English with commentary in *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice*, H.V. Guenther, Penguin Books, 1960.
153. *lTa phreng 'grel ba*, ff.2a. See note 157.
154. Rongzom's revealed texts did not survive him. See *gTer ston lo rgyus* of bLo gros mtha' yas, ff.97b.
155. *Man ngag lta phreng gi 'grel pa Rong zom pandita chen po Chos kyi bzang pos mdzad pa* (*lTa phreng Rong zom*), rNying ma bKa' ma, volume 'A, text PA, pp.177–279, 50 folios.
156. See Glossary of Sanskrit Terms.
157. *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba'i tshig don gyi 'grel zin mdor bsdus pa zab don pad tshal 'byed pa'i nyi 'od* (*lTa phreng 'grel ba*), rNying ma bka' ma, volume 'A, text BA, pp.279–360, 41 folios.
158. *'Od gsal*, *gsal ba* and *snang ba* are the degrees in progression of light's emanation. The "clear light" (*'od gsal*) is the basis of all light-form, of all colour and shade, identical to the "ground of being" (*kun gzhi*) and unobjectifiable. We know the clear light only as the radiance of the spectrum.
159. *mThu* is the Tibetan word that implies magical power. This is the "power" of synchronistic conjunction.
160. Primordial purity (*ka dag*) is the key word of *khregs chod* as spontaneity (*lhun grub*) is the keyword of *thod rgal.*
161. See also *The Flight of the Garuda*, pp.93 and 132, and *The Wish-Granting Prayer of Kuntu Zangpo*, pp.149–53.
162. See Glossary of Numeral Terms.
163. *rTogs pa bzhi.*
164. *Rig pa.*
165. *'Bras bu'i theg pa, phalayāna*, as opposed to *rgyu'i theg pa, hetuyāna.*
166. *'Bras bu'i chos* is the phrase used in the interlinear note and also in Rongzom's commentary.
167. The following excerpts are from *lTa phreng Rong zom*, ff.39b–40b.
168. *Shes rab, prajñā*: insight into the continuum of illusion as emptiness.
169. *bsNyen pa dang sgrub pa.*
170. *lTa phreng Rong zom*, ff.42a.
171. *lTa phreng Rong zom*, ff.44a.
172. *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* (*lTa phreng*).
173. Numbers in square brackets indicate the number in the nine vehicles, or approaches, to Buddhahood of the customary Nyingma School enumeration.

174. *gZugs kyi phung po, rūpaskandha*: this consists of colour and shape and also all things that have names. Thus it includes both visible and invisible objects, but excludes the internal processes of mind that are subsumed under the heads of the other four, internal, psycho-physical constituents.
175. *rTen 'grel bcu gnyis, pratītyasamutpāda*: the analysis of the interaction of man and his environment in terms of the "twelve elements of co-emergent origination," which is another translation of the phrase, is complete and satisfying; but greater significance is extracted from this mahāyāna contemplative technique with the realization that this function of manifestation is understood as "synchronicity" in Tantra.
176. *Pha rol tu phyin pa bcu, daśapāramitā*: the ten perfections represent an admirable, saintly ideal of life that any Christian could practice in his imitation of Christ; but the adjective "transcendental" is of crucial importance. Without the detachment inherent in the view of emptiness that "transcendental" implies, the Bodhisattva merely accumulates a wealth of merit through virtuous activity; the detachment implies insight into the nature of all things as emptiness and thus cultivates the ultimate awareness that leads to Buddhahood. To the Bodhisattva perfect action and perfect awareness are the two wings of the bird that soars into the Buddhafields.
177. *'Phags pa'i gzugs kyi sku phyag rgya rnam bzhi dang ldan pa*: "the *rūpakāya* with four *mudrās—mahāmudrā, dharmamudrā, samayamudrā* and *karmamudrā*.
178. *Māyā*-vision samadhi, wherein all is seen as magical illusion; *vajra*-vision, or imperturbable, samadhi; and the samadhi of universal sameness.
179. *'Phags pa'i gzugs kyi sku, aryarūpakāya.*
180. *Bya ba byed pa'i nus pa'i sgyu ma*: the fundamental characteristic of the feminine principle is receptive, open and responsive, but at the same time the Ḍākinī is a dynamo of uninhibited activity. This dynamic power that drives her and provokes activity is called *śakti* among the Hindus, and here we find the same term applied to the feminine aspect in Buddhist tantra: *nus pa* means *śakti*.
181. *Tshogs gnyis kyi tshogs rdzogs.*
182. This commentary on the title is found in the original text in an interlinear note, the origin of which is uncertain. See Rongzom's commentary.
183. It is only by inference that we grasp that the object (*don*) of intuitive realization (*rtogs pa*) is Knowledge (*rig pa*) until the first line of the paragraph entitled "Progressive Quickening of Confidence" states it explicitly. The fourfold intuitive realization of Knowledge is contingent upon the four supports, or "doors," but the relation between the cognitive factor and the support varies: in the first and last case, realization of Knowledge is coincident with actualization of the support (indicated by an adverbial particle, although in the first case the genitive was necessary in the translation), while in the second and third the supports produce the realization (indicated by the instrumental case).
184. *lTa phreng 'grel pa*, ff.26b. The two truths are absolute and relative truth.
185. "Sustaining grace" is a rendition of the Tibetan *byin brlabs*, more often translated as "blessings."
186. *bDe mchog, Saṁvara.*
187. *bDud bzhi*: see pp.36 and 175.
188. *Yi ge 'khor lo tshogs chen gyi sa.* This is the thirteenth stage of the Bodhisattva's path. According to some, it is the final stage, the stage of the Buddha, the dharmakāya stage. According to another system, there are three further stages: *ting nge 'dzin chen po, rdo rje 'dzin chen gyi sa, ye shes bla ma'i sa.*
189. This alludes to the ancient Vedic ascetic rite of sitting in the centre of a circle of four fires, preferably at noon in summertime, the sun above being the fifth fire.

GLOSSARIES

1. SELECTED TIBETAN DZOKCHEN TERMS

ka dag: primal or primordial purity, primally pure, pure from the beginning.
kun gzhi: universal ground, (original) ground of being.
klong: spaciousness, immensity, vast expanse, point instant.
klong yangs: vast expanse.
skal ldan: beloved.
sku, kāya: pure-being, Buddha's Body.
sku gsum: three existential modes, the three modes of being.
skyes med: unborn (inchoate); pure potential.
khregs chod (*trekcho*): Cutting Through.
'khrul pa: delusion, bewilderment; delusive, deluded.
'gyu: movement, active.
sgom pa: meditation.
sgyu ma: illusory enchantment, magical display, *māyā*.
bsgoms, bhāvanā: meditation, discursive contemplation, fixation upon an external or internal object, non-referential meditation, creative visualization, according to context.
ngo bo: essence.
ngo sprod pa: to be introduced to, to be initiated into.
dngos po mtshan ma: nominal delusion.
chos sku, dharmakāya: the existential mode of emptiness and clear light.
chos thams cad, sarvadharma: all phenomenal and noumenal experience, all elements of experience, all experience or all events in nirvana, all phenomena and noumena.
chos dbyings, dharmadhātu: plenum of pure space, continuum of pure space, reality-continuum.
'ja' lus: rainbow body.
rjen ne ba: naked and pristine.
mnyam pa nyid: sameness, identity.
bsnyen sgrub: "approach and identification."

rtog pa: mental constructs, conceptualization.
rtog med: thought-free, thoughtless.
rtogs pa: intuitive realization.
lta ba, darśana: vision, philosophical view.
stong pa nyid, śūnyatā: emptiness.
brtags pa or rtags pa, lakṣaṇa: mark, token, sign.
thig le, bindu: seed-essence.
thig le nyag gcig: sole seed, cosmic egg, cosmic seed.
thugs rje: responsiveness, compassion, (spirituality).
thod rgal (togal): Immediate Crossing.
bde chen, sukhāvatī: pure pleasure.
bde gshegs snying po: Buddha-nature, Buddha-essence.
gnas: quiescence.
gnas lugs: original nature, original existential condition.
rnam rtog, vitarka: discursive thought.
snang ba: appearances, lightform, phenomenal appearances, light, vision.
snang srid: phenomena and noumena, phenomenal existence.
spyod pa: action, conduct.
sprul sku, nirmāṇakāya: the existential mode of constantly transforming illusion.
spros bral: indeterminable, indeterminate, unelaborated.
spros med: formless, unformed and inconceivable, beyond conception.
phyag rgya chen po, Mahāmudrā: Magnificent Stance.
'phro: diffused; diffusion, movement.
bya bral: non-action.
'bras bu: goal, fruit, result.
dbyings, dhātu: space, plenum of space; = *chos dbyings* q.v.
ma bcos: unstructured, uncontrived.
ma rig pa, avidyā: literally, "absence of Knowledge," ignorance.
rtsal ba: creativity, efflorescence, skill, creative power, potency.
'od gsal: clear light.
gzhi: ground; also = *kun gzhi*, ground of being.
zang (nge) thal (le): (zangthal) all-pervading freedom of mind, "transference."
ye shes, jñāna: literally, ultimate cognition; Awareness, pure or primal awareness, non-referential awareness, gnostic awareness as a non-dual cognitive mode.
yi ge 'khor lo tshogs chen gyi sa: the Stage of the Great Assembly of Sacred

Letter Wheels, denoting the thirteenth level of the Bodhisattva path.
rang grol: spontaneous release, reflexive release, natural freedom.
rang ngo shes pa: reflexive recognition, spontaneous recognition; to recognize one's own nature; self-liberation.
rang gdangs: natural radiance or glow.
rang snang: self-manifest display, one's own natural manifestation.
rang byung: self-originating, spontaneously arising; (self-existent).
rang bzhin: nature.
rang rtsal: spontaneous efflorescence, self-expression.
rang rig: intrinsic knowledge, self-existing knowledge.
rang sa glod la zhog: compose yourself in the natural state, relax.
rang gsal: natural radiance or glow.
rig pa: Knowledge, presence; see Intro., p.46.
rig pa ye shes = ye shes kyi rig pa: Knowledge-Awareness, Knowledge as gnostic cognition.
ro gcig: one taste.
lam: path, method.
longs spyod sku, saṁbhogakāya: the existential mode of instructive vision.
shes rab, prajñā: perfect or penetrating insight (into the nature of all elements of experience as emptiness).
sang rgyas: pure and awakened being.
sang nge ba: secret fullness.
sal le ba: brilliance; brilliant, vivid.
sems, citta: mind.
sems nyid, cittatā: the nature of mind.
gsal ba: radiance, clarity.
hrig ge ba: intense vigilance of the awakened state, wakefulness; alert.
lhun grub: spontaneously originated/accomplished; spontaneity.

2. Sanskrit Terms

abhidharma: the psychological theory of Buddhism.
Ādibuddha: the Original Buddha, Kuntu Zangpo.
anuttarayoga-tantra: the supreme, non-dual, tantric vehicle.
anuyoga: the eighth vehicle to Buddhahood.
bodhicitta: the all-embracing compassion of the Bodhisattva.
Bodhisattva: aspirant devoted to the enlightenment of all beings.

Buddha: "the one taste of the dharmakāya."
caryā-tantra: see *ubhaya-tantra*.
Ḍākinī: the dynamic female archetype; the Guru's consort.
dharma: enlightened spiritual praxis.
dharmadhātu: the reality-continuum of pure space.
dharmakāya: the existential mode of emptiness and clear light.
gaṇacakra: the tantric sacrament of samaya reaffirmation.
Garuda: the bird symbolic of the Dzokchen vehicle.
hīnayāna: the approach to Buddhahood first taught by Śākyamuni.
jñāna: primal awareness of the dharmakaya.
kriyā-yoga: the fourth, ritual vehicle to Buddhahood.
lakṣaṇayāna: the vehicle to Buddhahood utilizing attributes.
mādhyamika: the philosophical method of maintaining the middle way.
mahāmudrā: "Magnificent Symbol," a synonym of Buddhahood.
mahāsiddha: a great master or adept in mahāmudrā.
mahāyāna: the vehicle of the Bodhisattva, Dzokchenpa.
mahāyoga: the seventh vehicle to Buddhahood.
maṇḍala: a symmetrical yantra representing the nature of mind.
mantra: a euphonic representation of a Buddha-deity.
mudrā: a gesture of hand or body indicating a Buddha-attribute.
nāga: an elemental spirit of water; a treasure protector.
nirmāṇakāya: the existential mode of constantly transforming illusion.
nirvāṇa: the perfect reality of peace and bliss.
paṇḍita: a Sanskrit scholar.
rakta: blood, symbolizing the nature of the Ḍākinī.
rūpakāya: the Buddha's "Body" of form.
sādhaka: a practitioner of dharma.
sādhana: the form of existential praxis.
śakti: the dynamic energy of the Ḍākinī.
samādhi: a degree of absorption in emptiness.
samaya: union with Reality and the commitment or pledge thereto.
saṁbhogakāya: the existential mode of instructive vision.
saṁsāra: the round of suffering and rebirth.
siddha: a master or adept in mahāmudrā.
siddhi: the siddha's powers of ultimate and relative attainment.
Sugata: a Buddha.
sūtra: scripture of the Buddha's teaching.

trikāya: the three modes of being, the three Buddha bodies.
ubhaya-tantra: *caryā-tantra*: the fifth vehicle to Buddhahood.
vajra: "thunderbolt," symbol of immutable power and awareness.
vajrayāna: vehicle of the *tantrika* and the *Dzokchenpa*.
vidyādhara: Bearer of Dzokchen Knowledge.
yantra: a graphic aid to understanding or compassionate manifestation.
yoga-tantra: the sixth vehicle to Buddhahood.
yogin: a practitioner of meditation.

3. NUMERAL TERMS

two truths: absolute and relative truth.
two veils: passion and mental concepts; emotion and intellect.
twofold ignorance: innate and conceptual.
three aspects of time: past, present and future.
three components: cognition, application and fruition.
three degrees of samadhi: maya-vision, vajra-vision and the samadhi of universal sameness.
three doors: body, speech and mind.
three emotional poisons: desire, aversion and ignorance.
three lower realms: of animals, hungry ghosts and denizens of hell.
three modes of Buddha's being: the three kāyas—dharmakāya, saṁbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya.
three principles: contingent effect, the imperative and the categorical imperative.
three realms: the sensory realm, and realms of aesthetic form and of formlessness.
three realms of samsara: of gods, humans and subterranean spirits.
three sacred letters: OM ĀH HŪNG.
four aspects of time: past, present, future and eternity.
four continents: the major island continents in the cardinal directions of Mt. Meru in Indian cosmology.
four degrees: approach, close approach, accomplishment and sublime accomplishment.
four demon-spirits: *skandhamāra, kleśamāra, devaputramāra, mṛtyamāra*—of embodiment, of the passions, of divine pride, and of death.

four elements: earth, water, fire and air.
four extreme ontological notions: eternalism, nihilism, Brahmanism and materialism.
four forms of consciousness: visual, auditory, olfactory and gustatory.
four infallible guiding stars: vision, meditation, action and the goal.
four mind-benders: discursive contemplation of four topics: the precious human body, impermanence, the laws of karma, karmic retribution.
Four Noble Truths: suffering, origin of suffering, nirvana, path to nirvana.
four objects of consciousness: sight, sound, smell and taste.
four seals: the four seals of the *rūpakāya.*
four sensory doors: eye, ear, nose, tongue.
four unshakeable bolts: unchangeable vision, meditation, action, the goal.
fourfold intuitive realization: Unitary Cause, sacred letters, sustaining grace, direct intuitive realization.
five (great) elements: earth, water, fire, air and space.
five aspects of (primal) awareness: mirror-like awareness, awareness of sameness, discriminating awareness, all-accomplishing awareness, awareness of the reality continuum.
Five Buddha Consorts: Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsinī, Tārā, Dhāthīśvarī.
Five Buddhas: Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, Vairocana; the Five Dhyāni Buddhas or Five Sugatas.
five colours: blue, white, yellow, red, green.
five families: *vajra, ratna, padma, viśvavajra, tathāgata* (or Buddha).
five fires: built around the Hindu ascetic in the summer.
Five Great Mothers: see Five Buddha Consorts.
Five Modes of the Original Buddha; the Five Buddhas (of the Five Families).
five modes of being: nirmāṇakāya, saṁbhogakāya, dharmakāya, svabhāvikakāya, vajrakāya.
five passions: desire, aversion, sloth, pride and jealousy.
five paths: five stages of the Bodhisattva's path.
five perfected Dhyāni Buddhas: see Five Buddhas.
five poisons: see five passions.
five psycho-physical constituents, *pañcaskandha*: name and form, feeling, perception, motivation, consciousness.
five sensory qualities: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch.

fivefold sensual pleasure = five sensory qualities.
Five Sugatas: see Five Buddhas.
five types of precious stones: gold, silver, turquoise, coral and pearl.
six realms: of gods, titans, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and denizens of hell.
six sense-fields: of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, mind.
six types of sentient beings: see the six realms.
six types of karma: karmas of the six types of sentient beings.
seven-horsed mandala: the sun.
eight worldly obsessions: praise and blame, ignominy and fame, loss and gain, pleasure and pain.
nine approaches to Buddhahood: the nine *yānas: śrāvaka-, pratyekabuddha-, Bodhisattva-, kriyātantra-, caryātantra-, yogatantra-, anuyoga-, atiyogayānas.*
ten directions: four cardinal, four intermediate, nadir and zenith.
ten levels or stages: the ten stages of the Bodhisattva's path.
ten transcendental perfections: *daśapāramitā*: moral conduct, generosity, patience, endeavour, concentration, perfect insight, skilful means, aspiration, inner strength, primal awareness.
Forty-two Buddhas: the Peaceful Deities.
Sixty Blood-drinking Deities: the Wrathful Deities.

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Care of Dharma Books

Dharma books contain the teachings of the Buddha; they have the power to protect against lower rebirth and to point the way to liberation. Therefore, they should be treated with respect—kept off the floor and places where people sit or walk—and not stepped over. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separate from more "mundane" materials. Other objects should not be placed on top of Dharma books and materials. Licking the fingers to turn pages is considered bad form (and negative karma). If it is necessary to dispose of Dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown in the trash. When burning Dharma, first recite OM, ĀH, HŪNG. Then, visualize the letters of the texts (to be burned) absorbing into the ĀH, and that absorbing into you. After that, you can burn the texts.

These considerations may also be kept in mind for Dharma artwork, as well as the written teachings and artwork of other religions.